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# CHRISTIAN COURIER

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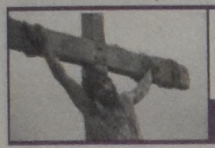

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59th year of publication

## Dutch church merger hits snag

**Harry der Nederlanden**
[With files from *Trouw, Reformatorisch Dagblad* and *Nederlands Dagblad*.]

The newly created Protestant Reformed Church in The Netherlands, which is supposed to fuse three denominations – the Netherlands Reformed Church (NRC - Hervormd), the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Gereformeerd) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church – may not wholly swallow up the three participating bodies in toto. It looks very much as if there will continue to be a Netherlands Reformed Church as 6-700 council members from almost 100 conservative congregations met in January to discuss how to pull out of the church merger, now in its final stage. Another gathering of local church councils that oppose the merger is due to take place on March 27.

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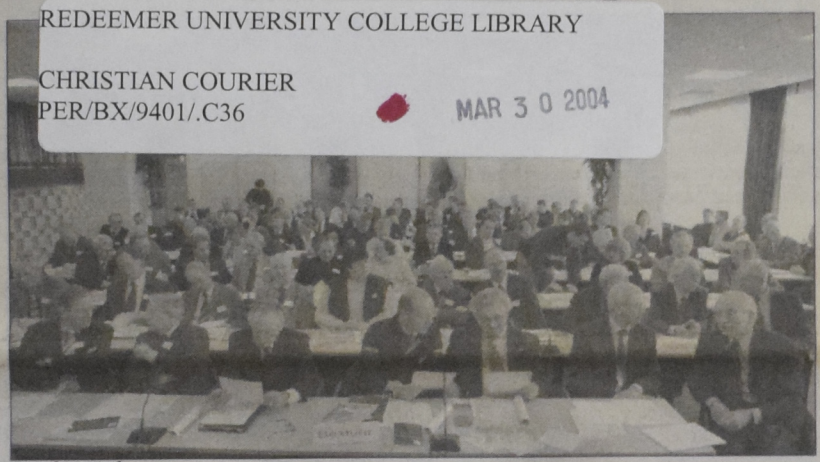

*Dutch synod*

All three synods have agreed to the merger, which will go into effect May 1.

The NRC's synodical leaders informed the group in a letter that the formation of a conservative counter-synod was forbidden. The assembled representatives, however, resolved to ignore what they termed as a threat. The Committee to Preserve the Netherlands Reformed Church began making plans for the formation of an emergency synod to be called before May 1, before the merger is consummated.

A. van der Plas, president of the NRC Synod, initially insisted that any vote against union with the new church was illegitimate and unlawful: the congregations must go along with the decision of Synod. A committee formed by Synod to minister to the special needs of concerned congregations was dubbed "The Inquisition" by the dissenting churches and was told it was not welcome by most of them. Over 60 congregations have signaled their intention to resist the unification process.

Many of the dissenters are against the new church because it will not be a confessional church. The confessions are no longer binding for its members, except in a rather loose way.

The issue has created great tensions in many churches. In some congregations the pastor is in favor while the majority of the council is opposed. Some pastors may have to leave their congregations if they stand by their convictions. One minister in Zeeland said his congregation of 1200 members was split down the middle, and the issue was tearing the whole town apart.

Dissenting pastors were told

*Continued on page 2...*

## Campus chaplains present situated, integrated faith to students

**Sonya Vanderveen-Feddema**

*The Christian Reformed Church has placed campus pastors on more than 35 colleges and universities across North America. Peter Schurman, a regular columnist for* CC, *was recently appointed to serve as the coordinator for campus ministries across Canada. Because of its commitment to education and a biblical worldview, the CRC has been especially gifted in its ministry to students on secular campuses. Institutions of higher education are places where the tensions between the ideologies of this world and the gospel are especially strong, as they vie for the hearts and minds of young people.*

*Sonya Vanderveen-Feddema interviewed several campus pastors to give us an idea of the kind of situations they must deal with and the struggles of youth on a secular campus of higher learning.*

Christian Courier *asked several chaplains who serve at secular universities to share their impressions of the role religion plays in the lives of students, to describe students' reactions to the Christian faith, and to relate the most effective ways to share the gospel on campus. Here's what Dr. John Valk, Rev. Ed Den Haan, and Rev. Hernan Zapata-Thomack told us.*

### Spirituality and religion

Valk, chaplain at the University of New Brunswick (UNB), maintains that students are very interested in spiritual matters. He cites a recent study, published in the Chronicle of Higher Education (Nov. 21, 2003), which reported the following statistics based on a survey done at the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA: 78% of students who responded to the survey said they discussed religion and spirituality with friends, 70% said they had attended a religious service in the past year, and 73% indicated that religious and spiritual beliefs helped form their identity.

Though the words religion and spirituality have been used interchangeably, Valk says, "Students largely respond more to the term spirituality than religion. Spirituality is an acceptable interest today. It is also a very vague term and what falls under spirituality today can be extremely varied. The term religion, on the other

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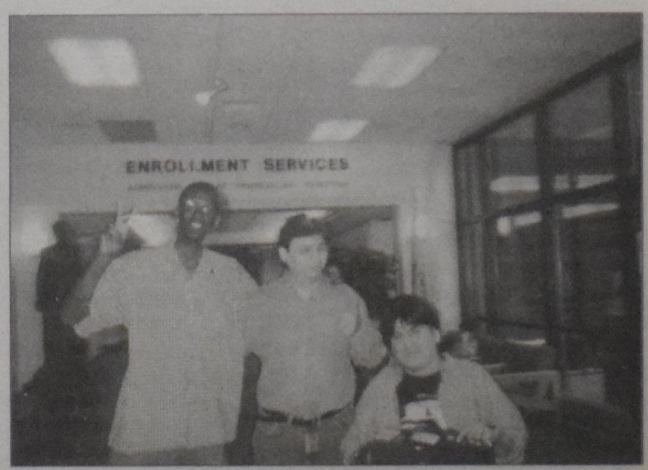



*Rev. Hernan Zapata-Thomack between two Peruvian students, Juan Barrera and Ricardo Garcia, who are members of PCCC Christian Club. The Christian Club tries to bring a Christian testimony in the political arena on our secular campus.*

*See* **Campus Chaplains**, *page 2...*

**News**

# Dutch Church merger

*...Continued from page 1*

they must go along with the union or resign their positions, losing their pensions and their homes. The property and goods of every congregation, Synod declared, belong to the denomination, not to the congregations who are worshiping there. The latter, however, are taking the matter to the courts, and if the courts rule in their favor, they expect that the number of congregations joining the exodus will take an incremental leap.

A communique drawn up by leaders of the group seeking to create a continuing NRC declared that finances should not deter pastors from joining the breakaway group; they pledged to provide financial support for them in the future. Such pastors would not be left to stand on their own, even if their congregation goes along with the union.

### Special status offered to dissenters

When the last Synod of the NRC gathered March 11, many delegates admitted that they were startled by the scale of the resistance. It was much greater, they said, than they had expected.

"The problems are greater than I had foreseen," said J. Stelwagen, chairperson of the denominational board that mediates in church conflicts. "Congregations and families are being torn apart. Things are happening in congregations where opinions are divided that are a disgrace for the church of Christ."

The president-elect for the united church, Jan-Gerd Heetderks, called on dissident congregations to remain within the united church. "We don't want to [form the new church] without you. There is plenty of room within the united church to preserve one's own identity and give witness to it," Heetderks said at the first gathering of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Church on March 12.

After long discussion, a motion was passed to invite concerned congregations to go along with the May 1 date, but under a special arrangement. They will be granted special status for the first five years of the super-church's existence. The offer was billed as a last attempt to meet the conservatives halfway.

Congregations who accept this status, however, must agree not to set up an alternative synod. After the five-year period, the arrangement would be reevaluated, and if the congregation still wanted to go its own way, it would receive help to do so.

A spokesman for the dissenters responded that although this might be alright for congregations where dissenters are in the majority, it does nothing for those large numbers of dissenters who are in the minority in their congregation, sometimes a large minority.

Speaking at the last Synod, one elder expressed the opinion that the decision to unite (in the works for over three decades) had been made prematurely: "In the fishing villages they say, Don't take out your boat when it's foggy. It's not smart."

Many members of Synod, however, expressed impatience: they felt every avenue had been exhausted to accommodate the conservatives.

President Van der Plas urged his church "to preserve our unity around the Word of God, for in our long history we have learned that division and schism are a blessing to no one, and they retard the progress of the Gospel."

At the last meeting of the Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, also on March 11, not a single congregation of that denomination had indicated its intention to break with the unification process, although seven congregations had been exploring alternatives.

Prof. J. Boendermaker of the Evangelical Lutheran Church admitted that the new Protestant Reformed Church would embrace large differences, but he suggested that the old distinction between the true and the false church had never been viable anyway. Churches have always been a mixture of both. "We must not force uniformity," he said, "but together confess what is the source of our strength to live and of our hope.... Let's be thankful we can stand for a tolerant country and a welcoming church."

Altogether the Netherlands Reformed Church has about 1,300 local congregations and 1.9 million members. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands has 650,000 members, while the Evangelical Lutheran Church has 14,000. The Roman Catholic Church is the country's largest denomination.

# Campus ministry

*...continued from p.1*

hand, comes with considerable baggage."

Den Haan, chaplain at the University of Guelph, agrees. "Religion, defined as an institutional response to God, primarily evokes a negative response in most students. Few are able to look past institutional errors to see God. Spirituality, a personal hunger for ultimate grounding, is a vibrant part of most students' lives. It is the door to most of our ministry on campus."

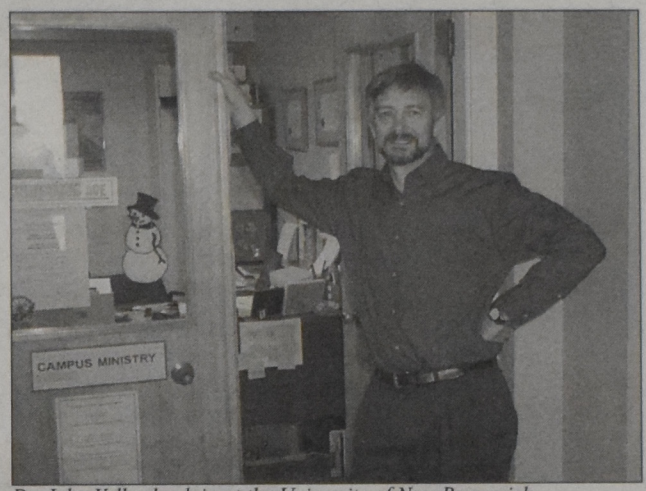
After serving for 5 years as a chaplain on American campuses, Zapata-Thomack, a Chilean pastor working at Passaic County Community College (PCCC), a linguistically and ethnically diverse community, and New Jersey City University, says he is impressed by the spirituality of the mainly first generation immigrant students he interacts with. He claims that "being attached to God is more important for them than having a green card since 9\11. High national security measures don't provide a sense of security, peace, and protection like religion does."

### Obstacles to ministry

Valk has encountered two major obstacles to Christianity at the UNB. First, many students aren't interested in organized religion, especially the institutional church. "Much of their information about organized religion comes from the media, and this is unfortunately rather distorted," he says. "Many equate Christians with fundamentalists, who are largely regarded as intolerant, narrow-minded, opposed to social change, and anti-science. All are well aware that the church has been caught up in sex scandals and abuse of native children."

Second, Valk notes, even students who respect Christianity or attend church don't often contact a chaplain. This could be due to the fact that attending a local church provides sufficient spiritual support. But it could also be the result of a more troubling reason.

"Many separate their Christian faith from their academic work," Valk explains. "They do not think Christianly about their studies. Many absorb the thinking around them. Also, since their academic work has become increasingly demanding, few will make the effort to connect with a chaplain and pursue these matters further."




*Dr. John Valk, chaplain at the University of New Brunswick .*

Social and racial fragmentation on the campuses where Zapata-Thomack serves give rise to various obstacles to the spread of Christianity. Creating a community of racially diverse students focused on serving God is difficult since they tend to gather in groups along linguistic or ethnic lines. He says, "Our challenge is always to remain in the covenantal commitment of Genesis 12:2-3, which is multicultural, multiethnic, multilinguistic, and multiracial."

### The Spirit breaks through

Zapata-Thomack has witnessed the Holy Spirit breaking down cultural barriers between students. In one instance, when the Christian Fellowship Club (CFC) decided to host an Easter play, 60 students were recruited. Most of them were Peruvians, who make up the majority of Hispanic students at PCCC. The question arose as to who would act the role of Christ. An Ecuadorean student, Paul Ulloa, was chosen.

This was a volatile issue, Zapata-Thomack points out, because of border skirmishes that had taken place between Peru and Ecuador. "Because both of the South American countries are very patriotic, the people hate each other," he claims. But he witnessed a miracle as God's love and forgiveness motivated the Peruvian students to accept and embrace Ulloa, who later accepted Christ as his Savior.

Though chaplains face obstacles, they also encounter many open doors. Valk notes that, though the UNB doesn't directly fund chaplaincy by providing for chaplains' salaries and benefits, it does offer other services free of charge, such as office space, classrooms, and audio-visual equipment. Also, university grant funding is available to bring speakers to campus.

More significantly, as a faculty member, Valk has the opportunity to present Christianity and its implications. In courses such as "Worldviews, Cultures, and Religion," "Science and Religion Dialogue," "Worldviews and Public Policy," and "Religion and Education," Valk says he encourages non-Christian students to think religiously and Christian students to think Christianly.

### Fellowship Club receives recognition

Zapata-Thomack has seen doors open for the spread of the gospel through CFC. Two years ago the club received an award because it was the largest, most dedicated, and most active club on campus. "Receiving recognition from the academic community and student body has been very stimulating and important for us. It has been a sign of our 'servant-shape'."

Each week the CFC sets up a book table where interested students can pick up Christian resources and sign up if they want Zapata-Thomack to contact them. Last semester nearly 300 students asked for spiritual counseling or passed on prayer requests. Also, two campus newspapers allow students to offer unsolicited contributions, giving Christians an opportunity to write articles from a biblical perspective. Zapata-Thomack hopes that also through this avenue Christians will

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News

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influence the academic community.

### A relational, situated faith

What are some of the most effective ways to share the gospel and its implications on a secular campus?

Den Haan points out the necessity of giving students individual attention. "There is a growing hunger for orthodoxy among students who are church members," he says. "Others want relational faith, faith that has meaning and personal warmth with God."

Zapata-Thomack agrees, and adds that chaplains need to get to know the students in order to effectively minister to them. "One of the main pastoral duties of a campus minister who serves in a multicultural and multiethnic mission field is to know his sheep very well." For example, the Hispanic students he ministers to aren't one homogenous group so he needs to be knowledgeable about their diversity. "If a campus minister honestly loves Hispanic students, he needs to study and know each single sub-group so he can contextualize the gospel." He does this by talking to the Hispanic students about the traditions, food, religious customs, and political and social issues in their native countries.

Zapata-Thomack and the CFC also put their faith into action by showing compassion to needy immigrant students. In partnership with Youth Employment Opportunity, an urban ministry run by a Christian Reformed Church in Paterson, the CFC helps students find work, as well as a connection to the local church. At UNB Valk shares the gospel in a number of different ways. The Bible study which he has led for a decade has provided one of the most direct contexts in which to speak about Christianity. Also, he assists InterVarsity Christian Fellowship in planning their meetings and counsels them on how to be an effective Christian voice on campus.

### Integrated truth

Valk maintains that the "most effective way in which I try to share the gospel and its implications is to operate at the 'heart' of the academy, that is, by being inside the classroom." As a faculty member, he structures his courses so that religious questions are highlighted and students become more knowledgeable about other worldviews, while deepening an awareness of their own. In one of his courses he takes students to various sacred sites, saving a visit to the local Anglican cathedral to the last "so that students will be more receptive to hearing what the essential beliefs of the Christian faith are."

Outside of the classroom, Valk is instrumental in developing community among faculty and students through Common Meals, where faculty and students cook and eat together, and a weekly Soup's On, where faculty, students, and visitors share a bowl of soup and become better acquainted.

Valk, Den Haan, and Zapata-Thomack, along with numerous chaplains throughout North America, play a significant role in sharing the good news of God's redemptive claim on secular campuses, where, as Den Haan points out, "Pious platitudes are disdained, but integrated truth rooted in God is, when presented with tact and immediate relevance, desirable."

## Schuurman Named To Top Campus Post

Grand Rapids, Mich.– Peter Schuurman is Christian Reformed Home Missions' new Educational Mission Leader beginning October 2004. Schuurman will provide coordination and visioning for campus ministries across Canada and the United States as part of Home Missions' ministry development team.

A native of Toronto, Schuurman comes to Home Missions after serving eight years as a campus pastor at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario.

"Our Reformed tradition has much to offer the world of higher learning," Schuurman says. "I hope to encourage the church to move into a deeper engagement with its academic neighbors."

Schuurman's work will include resourcing current campus ministries, empowering Christian Reformed classes throughout North America for sustained missional activities, promoting the Reformed vision of education in ecumenical contexts, and nurturing networks to raise up leaders for the future.

# Calvin hockey team captures national title

*The winning team*

A cross country trip produced a ational championship for the Calvin club men's ice hockey team as the Knights captured the American Collegiate Hockey Association (ACHA) Division III National Championship with a 5-0 victory over the University of Georgia Saturday night, March 6.

The victory over Georgia completed a three-day tournament run that saw Calvin rip off four straight victories to capture its first-ever national championship. Calvin finished the year with a sparkling 29-1 record, establishing a new Calvin single-season record for victories.

Calvin opened the tournament with a 5-0 victory over the University of Richmond on Thursday morning, March 4, and then topped South Dakota State 8-3 that night.

In the final, Calvin freshman goaltender Gregory Clark (La Porte, IN) collected his second shutout of the tournament while the Knights scored once in the first and once in the second to take a 2-0 lead into the final period of play. Koole picked up Calvin's first goal with sophomore Nick VerKuyl (Whitby, ON) scoring the second goal for the Knights.

"We felt pretty good about a two-goal lead," said Petrusma. "Our defense was sensational throughout the tournament and we felt that two goals was good enough to get the job done. At the same time, we wanted to keep attacking when the opportunities were there."

Calvin did just that as Koole scored his team-leading sixth goal of the tournament early in the third period to give the Knights a 3-0 lead. Calvin then went up 4-0 on goal by freshman Bryan Bandstra (Terrace, BC), only to suffer back-to-back penalties which gave the Bulldogs a two-man advantage. It soon became a three-man advantage as Georgia lifted its goaltender but Sieplinga made the Bulldogs pay as he won a faceoff, beat a gaggle of Georgia defenders on a sprint up the ice and lifted a shot into an empty Georgia net with 50 seconds left to play."

"Wow. What an accomplishment for this group of guys," said Petrusma. "We have such a wonderful blend of players who play so well together. We've got players from West Michigan, Canada and all over the United States but they're like a group of brothers who always look out for each other. I'm just tickled pink to see this group win a national championship." *[Condensed from story by Jeff Febus]*


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## Editorial

# Madrid and motiveless malignity

**Harry der Nederlanden**

In one of Shakespeare's most popular plays, a man of noble stature, but an outsider (he's a Moor), attracts the admiration and love of a beautiful girl from a prominent family, and he counts himself among the happiest, most fortunate of men when she marries him. His close lieutenant, however, begins whispering suspicions in his ear, planting doubts, putting vile interpretations on innocent gestures, cultivating the man's deepest doubts and fears, stirring up jealousy. At last, in a fit of jealous rage, the once noble man murders his young wife – only to discover that she was innocent all along.

The man is, of course, Othello, after whom the play is named; the villain is Iago, and the innocent victim Desdemona. It's an unusual love triangle, for Iago is not in love with Desdemona, nor is Desdemona flirting with anyone else, and Othello is a man above reproach. Othello has not been a harsh master to Iago nor done him an injustice; yet, Iago viciously drives him to despair and to murder what he loves most.

One of the favorite, inescapable topics of discussion surrounding *Othello* from the very beginning has been about Iago's motives. Why would he do such a horribly malicious thing? People have come up with a variety of answers, several suggested by Iago himself, for he hints at different reasons at different times. Yet, none of them really seem to stick. They just don't add up.

*Motiveless Malignity* is the title of one book on the subject – a ringing phrase to say that there is no motive: Iago does what he does simply because he is evil incarnate. Other critics point to Shakespeare's debt to the Medieval morality plays, which often featured a devil or vice figure that hatched all the mischief, like the psychotic serial killer in many contemporary thrillers.

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### The end of analysis

Well, you say it's only a play, a fictional story, in which villains often do things for no apparent reason. Authors are often sloppy, so maybe it's just not a very realistic play. To be convincing a story has to have well-motivated characters; otherwise the action doesn't make sense.

Yet, *Othello* has stood the test of time. It has attracted audiences from very different times and struck them as a compelling, darkly credible story. Is this in spite of Iago's lack of motive? Or because of it? In civilized, secular circles (and even in some circles not wholly secular) it has become unfashionable to speak of evil. But the arts – both popular and classical – are constantly bumping into this black hole of *motiveless malignity*.

At some point our probing intellects, our psychologists and sociologists, our historians and philosophers, in their inquiry into the underlying motivations of human beings, individually or en masse, sometimes must toss in the towel. They cannot make the acts transparent to human investigation. Something alien and dark has erupted into the lives of civilized society, and we must speak of *evil*. To invoke the term evil is not to explain anything, but to admit that our attempt to integrate the deed into the normal doings of humanity fails. In the final analysis what seems to drive the deed is contrary to all that is human; it is pure malice, malevolence.

### Assuming the mind of God

When our televisions showed us the scenes from Madrid, Spain, showing train after train burst open like overripe fruit, mangled bodies strewn along the tracks like debris, this was brought home to me with sudden, stark clarity. Behind this carnage is not the mind of someone working out strategies to achieve some political or battlefield objective. Motivating this terror is not some revolutionary idea of a better society that must pass through a violent birthing stage. Behind this is a mind that knows no compassion, that no longer identifies in any way with these human beings whose destruction it seeks in ever greater numbers. It is a mind that has found as its god the god of death and destruction.

It is the mind of men who have assumed the mind of God. For only God can take life at will. Looking down from on high in revulsion on this race of creatures who do not deserve to live, they infuse themselves with divine wrath and judgment. They become a holy, avenging fire, raining down terror, pain and death so that Terror may reign supreme. And fear is powerful, as we saw in the Spanish elections.

Terror is close to the heart of religion, for at the heart of religion is this revulsion, this horror at the frail creature that fouls the earth with its offenses. It is the heart of religion emptied of mercy and compassion, exulting instead in apocalypse. When the mind of man is caught up in the fantasy of becoming God, this is the ultimate result. Holiness turns to hate.

No matter how marred the image of God in us, we know enough to recognize how offensive we are and to utter judgment. And when in self-delusion we take on ourselves the power to utter absolute judgment, we would eradicate that image from the face of the earth in order to purify it. A divine Judge created in our own image ultimately becomes an engine of destruction.

### Suns of darkness

After 9-11 I had some sympathy for Prime Minister Chretien's observation that the event should prompt us to reflect on the inequities between North and South. That was far from implying that the American (or Western) capitalists had it coming because of their exploitation of the Third World. But it was a an attempt to understand that act of terror in familiar terms – as the product of economic inequality, cultural imperialism, unemployment, racial and national humiliation and so on. I am quickly becoming convinced that this sort of analysis is futile in understanding the sort of terrorism perpetrated in Madrid, in the 9-11 attacks and in many similar acts of terrorism, including the so-called resistance in Iraq.

If the opposition in Iraq had some humane, rational goal in mind, would it not be achieved more easily by cooperating with the reconstruction of Iraq so that the people of that country can take control of their own destiny by political means? But the opposition does not trust any civilized, human means. It thrives on chaos and destruction. It is in the grip of evil, of a mind in love with terror. These men are not pacified with promises of democracy and prosperity, they are not won with gifts of wheat and medicine, they are courting death, glorious death.

Think of Hitler and Stalin. They may have been adept at exploiting a variety of human motivations and political ends at first, but at some point they crossed over. They became suns of darkness, black holes that sucked out and obliterated all the decency and goodness around them in ever growing circles that expanded beyond the boundaries of their own lands. They slaughtered millions of millions and poisoned the lives of many, many millions more. That may have begun with talk of changing the world for the better, but what spun out was not any political ideology or program but a will to destruction. Motiveless malignity.

Although there is merit to Huntington's notion of a clash of civilizations, what we're talking about here is not a clash between Islam and the West. This terrorist mind is a threat and a terror to Islam itself. If a few terrorists can intimidate an entire democratic nation like Spain, is it any wonder that they can silence moderate Muslims within their own countries? They are rapidly transforming the tenor of life in many nations, setting in motion a politics of intimidation, fear and violence.

A Muslim woman interviewed on television said she no longer felt free to go out uncovered after a couple of militant men approached her on the bus and told her that, if they ever caught her out without her veil again, they would slaughter her. How many such violent men does it take to spread fear throughout a city and radically alter its way of life? Five percent? Ten percent? In Spain it took far, far less than that. Having succeeded in imposing their will in one thing by threatening violence, will they stop there? Not bloody likely.

Am I in danger of dehumanizing the people behind the bombs? No. They have dehumanized themselves. They have embraced evil. They have climbed the mountain, looked down upon their fellow men, and made a pact with a god who knows only judgment and destruction.

Why have I hammered out such a depressing and extreme statement? Because we Canadians often talk as if we aren't part of the War on Terror. Like the Spanish voters, we think we can stay out of the way. Perhaps, too, we can charm the terrorists by talking sweetly and pointing out that we are not Americans. That's self-delusion.

Terrorism is changing the world, and not for the better. It requires increased military expenditures, better policing, more intensive security. None of that is pleasant, and it diverts money from child poverty and education and many other much more worthwhile things. But when you go out into your garden this spring, you will not get far by speaking kindly to the thorns and thistles. You'll have to get out your hoe and hack at them.

Having said all this, I invite you to turn to the meditation by Pope John Paul II on page 17, which is much closer to the heart of Scripture than what I have written here.

## Letters

### Misses well-known hymns

The article by Calvin Seerveld entitled "Heartfelt singing of a memorized Psalm" certainly struck a cord with me.

I also mourn the fact that in many of our churches the well-known hymns of the church are rarely sung anymore and have been replaced by choruses that do not speak to me and are accompanied by music the church called "worldly" and therefore wrong during the first forty years of my life. I have come to consider myself a "Praise team refugee" for whom the Sunday worship service has lost much of its meaning. I realize nothing is permanent in this world but it would be so nice for us older people to be allowed to express some of our feelings toward and about our Father in the way we were taught and grew to love.

Sincerely, Bert Grasman
Moorefield Ont

### Is Allah the same God as the God of Christianity?

*Christian Courier*, February 16, 2004, printed a small article titled "Aggressive critique of Islam hurting evangelism" written with files from *Nederlands Dagblad*. The article tells us that evangelical Christian leaders in Europe and America caution their constituencies that "aggressive critique of Islam, denigrating comparisons of religious beliefs, name-calling, and declarations that Allah is not the God of Christianity are not just harming relationships between Christians and Muslims, but are also making evangelism more difficult."

I have no quarrel with discouraging approaching Muslims in the above mentioned way. Even starting a discussion with Muslims with a confrontational statement, that their Allah is not the God of Christianity shows lack of wisdom.

It is a different matter, however, to be told by Toby Howarth, an evangelist, that "we must begin by saying that Allah is the same God as the God of Christianity." As unacceptable is the remark of Dr.H.Vroom, a professor at the Free University of Amsterdam, that "we must begin with the idea that God has already a relationship with Muslims."

How could our God, the Triune God as confessed in the three Ecumenical Creeds, be the same as Allah? The approach encouraged by these evangelical leaders is neither evangelical nor Christian. It is a fallacy. This approach based on a misleading statement must miss the mark and even negates the need for evangelism. When the former Reformed Churches in The Netherlands in a synodical meeting declared that the God of the Jews is the same as the God of Christianity, they were at least consistent when they decided that Jews should not be evangelized.

I assume that the speakers at this evangelical conference believe what they say, and that they would want to evangelize, that is preach the Gospel, by all means, but not all means are permissible. They are too cautious in their fear of offending Muslims. It seems they dare not begin with standing right besides Jesus who proclaimed that "nobody comes to the Father except through me."

Do we no longer courageously dare to stand besides the apostles Peter and John before the Sanhedrin and before the forum of a Muslim world and say: "Salvation is found in no one else (but Jesus) for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"? There is only one God like our God. Our God is the Father of Jesus Christ. Islam's Allah is not the Father of Jesus Christ. He is not the same God as the God of Christianity. To say that makes evangelism difficult. So be it. Any other approach is born out of a sense of tolerance and a sense of caution that prevails in liberal circles.

I cannot believe that this kind of caution is sprouting from an evangelical mind. On many issues of difference there is a need for tolerance. But to caution fellow evangelicals to begin their approach in evangelism with a fallacy cannot be tolerated. Allah is not the same God as the God of Christianity. Muslims in particular know better than that.

Lammert Slofstra
Surrey, B.C.

#### Reply to Slofstra

I was hoping someone would respond to the article. (Incidentally, Peter Schuurman in his column of March 1 also writes about a missionary to the Muslims who said something similar. I mention it here because we inadvertently printed a rough draft of his article which makes it sound as if it is also Peter's idea. It is not.)

You're right, of course, that if Muslims already know God, the God who reconciles us through his Son, there's no point in engaging in missions; in fact, we might as well join the Muslims. But there are degrees of knowledge.

The missionaries' words reminded me of Paul's address to the Greek on the Areopagus about the altar to the unknown God: "The one whom you worship without knowing, I proclaim to you...." This accords with Paul's two-pronged stress on the ignorance of unbelievers and on their simultaneous knowledge of God (suppressed in unrighteousness). I don't quite know how to make sense of this unknowing knowledge, but it does strike me as a rich notion for evangelism. When we witness, we are never trying to introduce a God who is wholly unknown, for anyone who knows anything at all has already been addressed by God in everything that surrounds him and in everything he longs for and hopes for.

Editor

### Gibson's *Passion* makes impact

I've not yet seen the movie.

Yesterday morning I read the letter by Pastor Slofstra who felt the movie was too violent and that he would not recommend it as a must see. His lengthy letter was well articulated. Could the good Pastor be right? Millions have seen the movie but would they have if they had read this letter?

Last night at our home church we were introduced to a young lady who had called our host earlier to ask if she could join our regular midweek meeting. From the web site, she had discovered that there were numerous groups meeting midweek to study the previous Sunday's sermon lesson and picked ours. For many years this lady has been researching world religions trying to figure it out on her own. No, she had not yet been to our church on Sunday but something had occurred that could not wait until next Sunday. She had seen the *Passion of Christ* movie and told us, "If this Jesus endured that much pain because he loved me, the least I could do was to go see the movie. But now that I have, I need to find out what I must do to thank him."

She obviously captured the passion God has in his love for us. Based on her review, I think I will see the movie.

George Kloet
Oakville Ontario

### Watch the coffee intake!

This is in response to the writings of Bert Hielema, concerning the virtues of koffee drinking.

As I take all his writing with a grain of salt, this analysis of the beneficial effects of coffee drinking goes a little too far I think.

I do not know where Bert got his information. The question is, did it come from a reliable source?

When we write in a paper or magazine, we must bear in mind that people read these writings, expecting to become more knowledgeable about certain aspects of life. I have my doubts that this was the case when I was reading about the "virtues of coffee drinking." Living a healthy lifestyle, in which coffee drinking plays no role, will prevent most of the diseases which were mentioned in the article. Let's see what drinking coffee really is.

I will quote the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*: "Post-menopausal women who consume more than 300 milligrams of caffeine daily, roughly two to four cups of coffee, are far more likely to have lower bone density, a significant risk factor for osteoporosis. Furthermore, numerous studies have examined the relationship between coffee and a variety of woman's health problems, such as difficulties in conception, premature births, fibrosystic breast disease, breast cancer, birth defects and low birth weights." Coffee marketing groups dismiss these findings, or claim that coffee consummation is only one of many factors, and Bert Hielema assists them in their campaign with his writings.

However Bert is doing something right, he drinks organic coffee, only one cup though, why only one cup? He recommends many more cups to overcome a sickness, Does it not function as a prevention of diseases?

Bert, if you drink your 6 to 8 glasses of water a day, and live a healthy lifestyle, you don't need any coffee, and you feel better, look better, and live longer.

W. van Oene
501/2 Fairview Ave
St. Thomas Ont.


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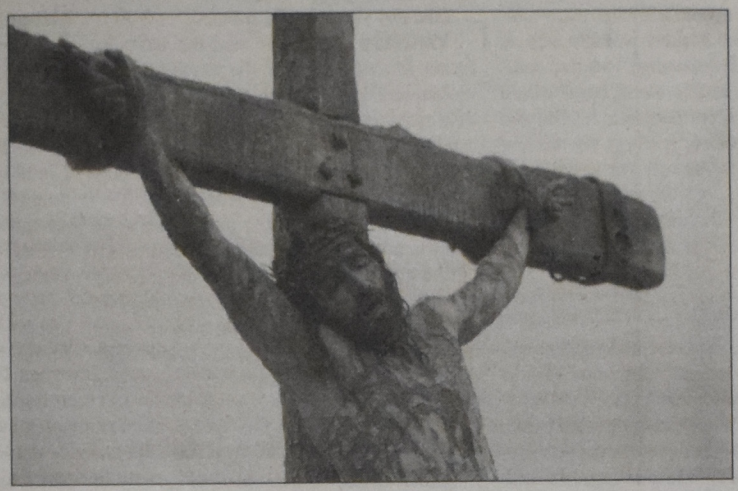
# Gibson's *Passion*: gratuitous violence?



In a letter, March 15, Peter Slofstra said he "doesn't get" how Christians can encourage each other to see Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, much less to take their non-Christian neighbors to see it. The film depicts relentless violence against Christ even while we decry violence in our society, Peter says, and he sees a disconnect (or perhaps some hypocrisy?) in that. Though most Christians who have seen the film have accepted the violence depicted in it, however uncomfortable it is, Peter believes that violence is gratuitous because it is "unreal"; i.e., in the sense that no human being would, in reality, be able to tolerate that kind of beating and be left standing, much less left to drag a heavy cross some distance. I have to agree with Peter's self-critique: he doesn't "get it."

It's true, as he says, that the Gospels present only the basics of the story of Jesus's last hours, his unspeakable scourging, emotional suffering and (far the worst) abandonment by God. That lack of detail is, however, true of pretty much the entire Bible. How many times in Scripture, Old Testament and New, *are* we given many details? How many times when we read the Bible don't we wonder, "What was that like?", "What did that person, place or thing look like, or sound like?", "What happened then?", "Why did So-and-So do this?", "Why did God do that?"

A classic, undoubtedly correct, answer to that is that God didn't inspire the biblical writers to include such detail because those aren't things we really *need* to know in order to understand who God is and who we are in relation to him. But is it wrong to do that wondering? To be so curious about those biblical people who were our fellow human beings and fellow people of God, with all their wisdom and foibles? And is it wrong to wonder about our Savior's incarnation? What was he like as a man, a person like us? What did he feel? How do his being fully divine and fully human intertwine?

If we're careful to stick to the spirit of Scripture is it wrong to dramatize, even graphically dramatize, portions of the Bible or biblical characters, especially Christ's life; or Christ's suffering for our sakes? And is there not a way in which that depiction of Christ's intense agony gives us Reformed people, who have sometimes (perhaps often) been squeamish about the implications of Christ's humanity, a new appre-ciation of that humanity? That's certainly the effect this film had on me.

### Handel's Messiah

This is an age-old debate. It calls to mind work I've been doing for the last few years researching and writing a book about Handel and his biblical oratorios. (Apart from *Messiah*, he wrote well over a dozen oratorios based on Old Testament or Old Testament apocryphal characters.) Handel was criticized roundly by some for dramatically presenting *Messiah* as he did, and for presenting it in the theatre. Earlier, a tradition had arisen in Lutheran Germany which vividly depicted Christ's Passion in words and music. Handel and a handful of other German Lutheran composers each wrote a Passion using the same libretto (text), based on the biblical accounts, by a man named Brockes (and Bach later used part of that libretto for his *Passion according to St. John*). Brockes' early 18th century libretto minces no words about Christ's suffering. It is surprisingly, at times gruesomely, graphic. Parts of it are still startling. It even pulls the listener into the story in a way which he or she may at first be reluctant to go. Does that sound familiar?

I see Mel Gibson's movie as a 21st century metamorphosis of the Passion for our visually fixated age. I realize I'm mixing traditions here: the musical Passion tradition is Lutheran. Gibson is a pre-Vatican II Catholic, and thus his Passion tradition is Roman Catholic. He himself has mentioned the dramatic, "realistic" Italian Catholic painter Caravaggio (1573-1610) as a visual inspiration. Still, there are also similarities to those graphic musical Passions I mentioned.

### Stations of the cross

Viewers of Gibson's *Passion* will be helped by at least a little awareness of the centuries-old Catholic approach to Christ's suffering. It is not an approach we Reformed or evangelical people are used to (and there are aspects of it which, Bible in hand, we can legitimately criticize). It is a tradition which expresses gratitude for our salvation by asking the believer to contemplate and *share in* the sufferings of Christ. The believer does that by following Christ each step along the way of the cross, his way of sorrow (*via dolorosa*) – thus emerges the "discipline" of the "stations of the cross." This movie is really the stations of the cross writ very, VERY large. Writ in a way which Gibson hoped would make a profound impact on jaded modern audiences accustomed to constant visual and aural stimulation, and accustomed to tuning it out.

In the church year we are currently in Lent. Catholics are not just "in" Lent but *observe* Lent. The movie was deliberately released on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, so that it would serve in just this manner for Catholic Christians, and for all Christians and all viewers who have the eyes to see. That the Spirit has been, and is, at work giving many those eyes to see, and through that sight to then encounter the living Christ of Scripture, is indisputable, I think.

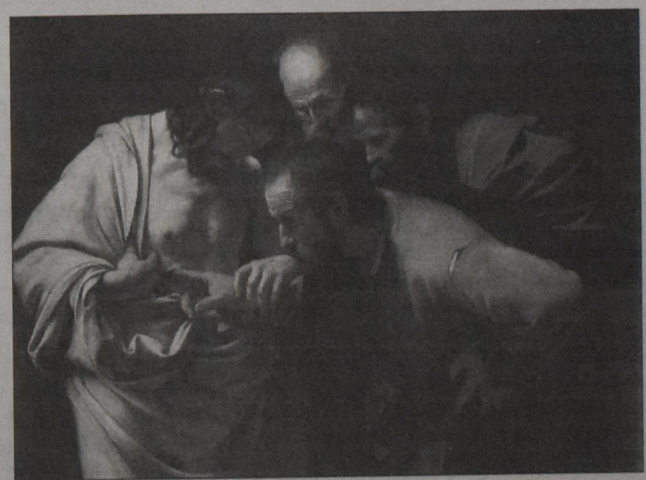
### A Catholic gift

Getting back to that violence: Peter Slofstra wrote, "You cannot portray such brutal treatment in the name of reality and believe that such treatment is survivable." Can you not? In the famous "Suffering Servant" passage in Isaiah 53 we read: "...There were many who were appalled at him – his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness" (v. 14, NIV). I don't think Gibson is wrong to interpret that to mean that Christ was (would be) so disfigured by his ordeal that his features were no longer recognizable, or even recognizably human. We often quote the part of Isaiah 53 which says "by his stripes we are healed." So does Gibson as the film begins, but he takes that healing *by Christ's wounds* quite literally.

Was that torture so "unreal" as to be gratuitous? What about the fact that Christ the man is also God? Can't we assume that God brought him through it – in order to bring him all the way to the cross? The *Heidelberg Catechism* interprets "he descended into hell" as Christ having suffered the agony of hell *on the cross*. The film may be open to two interpretations: that the Father was indeed with his Son, the Spirit upholding him, during his all the physical and emotional agony portrayed before and on the way to Golgotha – thus *enabling* him to endure it (as many Christians have been able to endure unspeakable torture for Christ's own sake). Or: the horrific scourging and what Christ suffered during his trial was part of the agony of hell he suffered because God had already abandoned him. I think the film hints at the first interpretation.

Dr. Robert Johnson of Fuller Seminary in California (where Richard Mouw is president) was a guest on American public television's *News Hour* on Ash Wednesday. Johnson called this film "a Cath-olic gift to many of us in the Protestant tradition who so easily move from Palm Sunday to Easter and just gloss over what happened on Good Friday" (see www.fuller.edu for the entire exchange). I agree. The film may take us Protestants *way* out of our comfort zones (Peter Slofstra was clearly feeling that), but it's an unforgettable journey. And because it's so searingly memorable it is a gift which may reap unexpected blessings and new insights for our relationship with Christ quite literally for the rest of our lives. Until we see our broken, risen and ascended Lord face to face, whose glorified body still bears the scars of his suffering for us.

**Marian Van Til,**
**Lewiston, N.Y.**



*Painting by Caravaggio. Thomas puts his finger in the wound of Jesus.*

Culture

# Hidalgo: Nothing new under the sun

**Heidi VanderSlikke**

One night as Jack and I sat on the couch watching television, Viggo Mortensen suddenly raced across the screen on a painted horse, seconds ahead of a gigantic sandstorm. Jack tensed up beside me and fixed his gaze on the name Hidalgo blazing dramatically in front of our eyes. I looked over at Stephanie and smiled, "Guess what movie your dad's going to drag me to next?"

If Indiana Jones were ever to meet Seabiscuit, the result would be something like Hidalgo (Touchstone Pictures, rated PG). Although Mortensen, better known as Aragorn from The Lord of the Rings, lacks the personal charisma of Harrison Ford, he exudes a wild-west sincerity, making him a likable, ingenuous hero. Hidalgo's storyline doesn't move from one heart-stopping predicament to the next in the way of Indiana Jones, but there are enough memorable moments to captivate the viewer. Like Seabiscuit, Hidalgo is the underdog horse running in an epic race against all the odds.

The plot line isn't particularly original: good guy faces identity crisis and must fight at all costs to accomplish peace with self. It may not be new, but this struggle resonates within most of us, even if we don't do anything quite so valiant in our lifetime. Despite its shortcomings, Hidalgo is an entertaining tale of high adventure, worth seeing.

The story is loosely based on the real life character of Frank T. Hopkins and his legendary stallion, Hidalgo. Hopkins was a Pony Express rider, buffalo hunter and long distance racer in the post Civil War United States. Hopkins and Hidalgo did compete in the Ocean of Fire Race, traveling across 3000 miles of Arabian desert in the late 1800's. The film uses historical events, such as the Indian massacre at Wounded Knee Creek and characters like Buffalo Bill Cody to give it an air of credibility. Beyond that, the story is mostly fictional.

Hopkins finds it difficult to know who the good guys are when he unwittingly delivers the orders that lead to the US cavalry's slaughter of the Indians at Wounded Knee in 1890. He withdraws to life as a drunken rodeo performer in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show, where even his horse grows weary of his self-pity.

The turning point comes one day when Hopkins is challenged by the wealthy Sheikh Riyadh (Omar Sharif) to enter the infamous Ocean of Fire Race. Until then, the Ocean of Fire, a centuries old tradition of the Middle East, was restricted to the finest purebred Arabian horses. Hopkins and his little Mustang are definitely a breed apart. The small horse and his gangly cowboy stand out comically in the starting line with the majestic Arabians and their Bedouin riders. The hostile environment, unfamiliar culture and rivals who aren't above cheating combine to make a harrowing ordeal for Hopkins and Hidalgo.

Midway through the race Hopkins is tempted by a seductive offer from an unscrupulous British aristocrat with her own reasons for wanting to win. He could easily take the cash and return to the States with a tidy profit. But there's more at stake than money. He must confront his true identity and discover the hero within. Besides, his horse won't let him quit. Hopkins learns that a person's choices depend far more on character and personal integrity than heritage or vicissitudes.

At its core, this is the story of a champion's heart, waiting to be liberated by the most trying of circumstances. There's an old English proverb that says, "A hero is one who is too afraid to run away." It's the truth that sets Hopkins free. Sound familiar? If a message is important, it's always worth considering again.

# Texts of truth, texts of terror

CAMPUS CULTURE

**Peter Schuurman**

Being a teaching assistant for a World Religions class this semester has been tricky. As the Judeo-Christian scriptures are one of the texts, some students are reading the Bible for the first time in their lives. Some Christians may think this is automatically a wonderful situation, but the experience has me re-considering the pre-Reformational practise of discouraging the laity from reading the 66 books. The Bible is a difficult book, and reading it requires a context and a community, and maybe even clergy.

The first thing that struck many of the female students was the poor treatment of women in Genesis. Some were offended, if not utterly appalled. Wrote one student in her paper:

"Since the moment Eve persuaded Adam to eat the forbidden fruit and was to blame for the expulsion from Eden, women have been portrayed in the Bible as evil and abominable.... Eve is depicted in the Bible as the source of evil and death.... Men could live with morals and virtue if it were not for women.... It is almost as if the women in the Bible are deliberately and consciously 'lying in wait' for the purpose of leading men astray."

This was not an isolated opinion, if you think I'm just sensationalizing one essay. Another student similarly wrote:

"Genesis portrays women in a negative way where they are seen as deceivers, temptresses and at best wives whom their father and husbands view as chattel. The primary value of women was childbearing... The Old Testament is deemed God's Word to the people, yet it is clearly a man's book written by men for men. How then can a woman relate to such scriptures, which sanction the inferiority of women?"

Reading the Bible for the first time, these women were not prepared for what Phyllis Trible called the 'texts of terror.' I'm not sure if a year of Bible school would have changed their opinion. As long as one judges the text according to one's own cultural bias, it will continue to offend.

## God and genocide

It is not simply cultural bias, however. There are genuine ethical considerations that fuel these reactions. Another example would be the instances of ethnic cleansing in the Bible, such as Deuteronomy 7:2 and Joshua 6:21. Writes one student on this subject: "Genocide is defined as the mass extermination of human beings especially of a particular race or nation. Certainly the passages above would seem to represent such an act of genocide."

It does not matter how Biblically literate you are: these passages are upsetting. I remember when Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann was asked how he would preach on passages such as these and he replied by saying, "I wouldn't."

The subordination of women and genocide are not the end, either. One student wants to do an essay on the endorsement of slavery in the Bible. Two others are interested in investigating the texts relating to homosexuality. Reflecting on all this, it seems their primary concern is an evaluation of the moral status of the Bible.

The Bible in a secular classroom

I stumbled on an undergraduate student who has been a teaching assistant in some similar situations. He shared with me a short paper he wrote entitled "Teaching Scripture in the Secular Classroom," from which I took this extended quote:

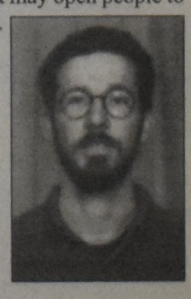
"The unbelieving student approaches the text not *ex nihilo,* but from a standpoint created by prejudices and presuppositions acquired from various avowedly anti-Christian social groups. It thus becomes very difficult for such a student to understand Christian thought past and present. The key to overcoming this handicap is emphasis on the first principle of responsible Biblical hermeneutics: the unity of the Scriptures ... to interpret Scripture with Scripture, allowing clear passages to illumine difficult ones, is the basis of responsible Biblical scholarship....

"When reading histories, he must be able to respond that God's advocating war and ordering slaughter in the Old Testament histories is not the whole story. Indeed, the fighting and death must be understood within the context of the God of the prophets, He of the Divine plan for every individual and race, and also the benevolent God of many Psalms and the New Testament.... The instructor is obligated to point out that the limited pericopes taken are but cuttings of the whole, and that conclusions about a God of 'genocide' or 'callous injustice' are not supported in reality....

"[One pitfall is] anachronism. The Bible's unity does not preclude a chronometric evolution. God sets down rules gradually and progressively.... Students are often tempted to wonder why certain moral dicta they regard as basic are not applied to the early patriarchs, thereby forgetting the era in which the patriarchs lived and the societies out from which God chose them.... On the other hand, students are occasionally surprised by the 'progressiveness' of much of the New Testament, and by its relations to their modern perceptions. This surprise is for the most part unwarranted, since many of our cultural suppositions about right and wrong can be traced to the New Testament...."

With these practices in place, the Scriptures can be left to defend themselves, to stand on their own in the questioning environment of the university class.

The Bible is an unfamiliar and even dangerous book. Some passages will always make me squirm, while others I must wrestle with until they break or bless me. The stories are more than 2000 years old, and come to us from the other side of the world. We should not be too quick to parachute it into people's homes. Yet given the right guidance and a teacher not easily threatened, it may open people to God's story, and God's Spirit.



*Peter Schuurmen, chaplin at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont. has been appointed Christian Reformed Home Missions' new Educational Mission Leader beginning October 2004.* *(See p.3)*

Church

# Baptist relief workers attacked in northern Iraq

*David E. McDonnall (3rd from left) was one of those killed in Iraq.*

**Barbara G. Baker**

ISTANBUL (Compass) — Four American Christians working on humanitarian relief projects in northern Iraq were killed and a fifth critically injured when unknown gunmen opened fire on their vehicle in Mosul late on the afternoon of March 15.

The victims were identified as Larry T. Elliott, 60, and his wife Jean Dover Elliott, 58, of Cary, North Carolina; Karen Denise Watson, 38, of Bakersfield, California; and David E. McDonnall, 28, of Rowlett, Texas.

McDonnall's wife Carrie, 26, remains in critical condition in a military support hospital in Mosul. According to a report from Agence France Press (AFP), Mrs. McDonnall was hit by four bullets in the chin, leg and chest.

All five were serving under the international mission board of the Southern Baptist Church, headquartered in Richmond, Virginia. The team's humanitarian mission included research on a water purification project for the region and delivery of relief supplies, including food and clothing.

The five were traveling together in one car on the eastern side of Mosul when they were cut down by automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades about 5 p.m. Their bullet-riddled vehicle was discovered shortly before sunset by an off-duty Iraqi policeman, who took the two wounded survivors, David and Carrie McDonnall, to an Iraqi hospital.

David McDonnall died a few hours later from his injuries while being transported by helicopter to a US military hospital in Baghdad.

Iraq's largest northern city, Mosul, has been rocked by violence the past three days. Militants attacked an Iraqi government convoy there on Sunday, killing the regional secretary of labor and social affairs and his driver. Earlier on Monday, one civilian was wounded and vehicles damaged when a police station came under attack.

Less than a week ago, two American civilians working for the Coalition Provisional Authority were shot and killed along with their Iraqi translator in an ambush just south of Baghdad.

Today the top US military commander in Iraq, Army Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, admitted that Iraqi militants appeared to be turning their focus from military targets to attack foreign civilians and their Iraqi colleagues involved in reconstruction projects.

According to the BBC, the US-led coalition is now investigating whether Western civilians are actually being targeted, or simply caught in the general lawlessness prevalent in the country.

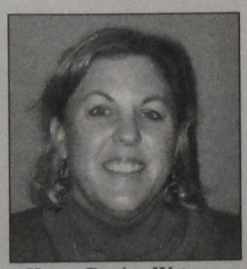
The Mosul attack was the second fatal attack against expatriate Christians in Iraq in the past month. American Baptist pastor John Kelley, 48, was killed by gunfire on February 14 while he and three other American pastors were returning to Baghdad in a taxi from the ancient site of Babylon.

Without warning, a white van pulled alongside their taxi and sprayed them with AK-47 rifle fire. His three companions suffered various shrapnel injuries, but Kelley died instantly from a bullet through his back. The group was on a two-week visit to Baghdad to attend the ordination of an Iraqi pastor for a new Baptist church in the capital. Married with four children, Kelley had pastored the Curtis Corner Baptist Church in Wakefield, Rhode Island.

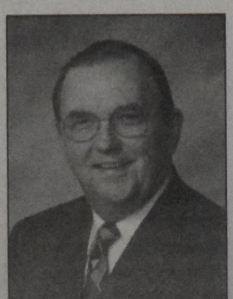
In an article posted today on the English website of Al-Jazeera entitled "Christian missionaries killed in Iraq," the Qatar-based satellite news channel declared, "The presence of missionaries in majority-Muslim countries is highly resented by locals as another element of foreign influence."

By contrast, the Christian advocacy group Middle East Concern (MEC) noted in a press release today that many Christian missionaries currently working in Iraq report "a warm welcome from the Iraqis they go to assist." This assistance includes leadership training for local Christians in Iraq's newly emerging Protestant churches, as well as "equally essential development assistance" such as the Southern Baptist team was providing in Mosul, the MEC release said.

The five Southern Baptists shot down yesterday in Mosul "knew they were traveling to a dangerous part of the world," mission board spokesperson Manda Roten told the Associated Press. "Their personal love for God and their desire to obey him would outweigh any personal risks for them.... When you sense God calling you to go overseas, safety isn't the primary concern."



Karen Denise Watson



*Larry T. Elliott and his wife, Jean Dover Elliott*

# Violence by Muslim militants in Nigeria sponsored by British Saudis

**Obed Minchakpu**

KANO, Nigeria (Compass) — Government security agents have reported the arrest of a Sudanese Muslim businessman who heads a Saudi Arabia-funded charity in connection with financing bloody attacks on Christians in Nigeria.

Sheik Muhiddeen Abdullahi, director of Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust, was arrested February 20 in the northern city of Kano pending investigations into his organization and activities, but was released 10 days later.

A State Security Service official told Compass that Sheik Abdullahi was arrested following "the discovery of financial transactions running into millions of dollars between him and an Islamic fundamentalist cleric, Alhaji Sharu, in Kano."

In December of 2003, a group of Islamic fundamentalists calling itself "Nigeria's Talibans" declared a part of the country an Islamic republic and launched attacks on Christian communities.

The Islamic militant group fought a series of battles with the police and army units. Security agencies subdued the group after two weeks of battles that left two policemen and a dozen militants dead, and thousands of people displaced from the Christian communities targeted by the fundamentalists.

Security agents arrested 47 of the militants. One of them, Muslim cleric Alhaji Sharu, provided them with a confession exposing the activities of the charity headed by Abdullahi.

Sharu reportedly disclosed that he acted as a middleman between Islamic fundamentalist groups in the country and the Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust, a charity funded by wealthy Saudi Muslims that maintains headquarters in Britain.

Charitable funds had gone to finance religious violence in Nigeria, according to Sharu. In addition, the trust had been propagating the Wahhabi sect of Islam. Afghanistan's ousted Taliban regime and Osama bin Laden are adherents of Wahhabi Islam.

## Muslims protest release of radical leader

Abdullahi's release sparked a mass protest by more than 5,000 Sufi Muslims in Kano city, calling for the immediate closure of Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust offices.

Protesters chanted, "Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar" ("Allah is great") as they marched to the state assembly house. They demanded the Wahhabi Muslim sect be banned from the country.

"As a matter of urgency, the state government should close the office of Al-Muntada Al-Islami because of its activities which have resulted in religious unrest in Nigeria," Abduljabbar Nasiru Kabara, spokesman for Qadiriyya Sufi Muslims, told journalists during the protest march.

Like the protesters, the majority of Nigeria's Muslims profess the Qadiriya Sufi tradition of Islam.

"We don't believe in the use of arms as a means of propagation of Islam and we don't encourage militancy," Abdullahi told media representatives upon his release from police custody. "Our objective is Islamic propagation through education."

## Iran active in Nigeria?

Abdullahi's arrest came just one month after the Nigerian government announced that an Iranian diplomat was arrested on January 23 for spying on church and government buildings in the Nigerian capital of Abuja.

"The suspect was found with a digital camera, taking photographs of sensitive places," Inspector General of Police Alhaji Tafa Balogun announced at a February 3 press conference in Abuja.

The police chief listed the National Ecumenical Center; Christian churches; a presidential villa; the defense headquarters; and the embassies of Israel, the United Kingdom and the United States as sensitive places. Inspector Balogun refused to disclose the identity of the Iranian diplomat.

Mrs. Oluremi Ayo, special adviser on the media to Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, told Compass in Abuja that the Nigerian government is committed to fighting terrorism and would pool resources with other states in the war against terror.

"The president of our country is a core player in the global fight against terrorism and has ensured that all of the security agencies have taken measures to root out any element that may want to disturb the peace here," she said. "He again underscored the fact that this nation would not be used as a base for any terrorist organization."

Church

## Newspaper attributes India's 'evangelism boom' to US government

India (Compass) – On January 30 *Tehelka*, a weekly newspaper, accused the U.S. government of having a "conversion agenda" for India. The 11-page cover story in the inaugural issue portrayed Christian missionary work as a "sinister and disturbing phenomenon" that should "ring alarm bells within the intelligence agencies in India." A second report on February 7 claimed mission organizations were using the HIV/AIDS crisis as an opportunity for evangelism.

Both Catholic and Christian leaders said the claims are ludicrous and issued a joint press statement refuting the allegations. Meanwhile, *Tehelka* proudly admitted that two senior staff members had assumed false Christian identities for their investigation of several mission organizations. "*Tehelka* has carried an unfair representation of my views," one Christian leader told Compass. Many Christians fear the reports will fuel religious tensions throughout India as the radical Hindu party exploits the issue to extend its influence.

The Evangelical Fellowship of India (EFI) joined the National Council of Churches in India and the Catholic Bishops Conference to issue a joint statement urging citizens to vote for candidates who support communal harmony and religious freedom. "The representatives we elect must be able to redirect the path of our nation to strengthen democracy," the document states.

"The [newspaper] report seeks to divide the unity of the church in India," said Rev. Richard Howell, general secretary of the EFI. "But they cannot divide the church, as all major Christian denominations in India stand united against the *Tehelka* reports."

After the *Tehelka* articles appeared, the Union Home and Law Ministries of India began pushing for Parliament to grant state administrators greater power to restrict foreign aid coming into the country for Christian ministries.

## Mennonites concerned about missing Vietnam members after assault

**Noel Bruyns**

Phuket, Thailand (ENI) — The health and whereabouts of four members of the Mennonite Church in Vietnam, who were severely assaulted and detained by security forces, are unknown, raising concern for their safety.

As a result, Pastor Nguyen Quang Trung, president of the church, has written to the Ho Chi Minh City authorities, asking them to resolve the matter. The Mennonite World Conference (MWC) reported that on March 2 security forces in Ho Chi Minh City, beat and detained the four church members, who are associates of Pastor Nguyen Hong Quang, the church's general secretary.

A member of the church congregation reported that the incident was triggered by the general secretary and pastoral assistant Pham Ngoc Thach taking down the motorcycle licence number of two undercover agents who had been watching them for several weeks and had threatened them. When Thach and an associate pastor photographed the licence plate, the two agents charged after them and hit them in the chest and face.

"Within a half hour, a large number of security police from the precinct and district offices and special armed police arrived and wrote up a complaint, accusing the church people of disturbing the peace," the MWC statement said. The security police then gave orders to beat up Quang and his associates who had documented the presence of the undercover agents.

"Pastor Quang had his arms pinned to his body while others beat him in his face, punched his chest and kicked his legs," said the MWC.

Twenty-four year old Nguyen Hieu Nghia, a deacon of the church, was severely beaten, then taken to the precinct police station. When his brother Nguyen Thanh Nhan, Thach, and another church associate went to inquire about Nghia, they were also detained.

"It was later learned that police beat Thach and Nhan unconscious, and justified their mistreatment by charging the young Christian leaders with resisting an officer," the statement continued. By March 10, the four were still missing. Quang has, according to the MWC, long raised the ire of officials for acting as counsel for church leaders and churches facing legal challenges and police harassment.

Government spokespersons, citing the nation's constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion, denounce international reports of human rights violations as fabrications, said the MWC.

## Christians sound alarm about 're-conversions' to Hinduism in India

**Anto Akkara**

New Delhi (ENI) — Christians are calling for an end to what they say is a Hindu nationalist-inspired campaign to re-convert Christians back to Hinduism in India's eastern state of Orissa ahead of state and national elections scheduled for April.

"This is a conspiracy for election purposes," said Baptist pastor P.R. Parichha, president for Orissa of the All India Christian Council (AICC). "They are targeting the Christians in the run-up to the elections and to consolidate the Hindu votes."

On March 4, more than 200 people, apparently Christians, reconverted to Hinduism at a ceremony at a temple in Jharsaguda organized by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, or World Hindu Council.

The ritual was attended by leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the senior partner in India's governing coalition, which opponents claim has a Hindu nationalist agenda.

"This is election propaganda," said the Rev. Cherian Joseph from the Roman Catholic diocese of Sambalpur which includes Jharsaguda. "They are trying to divide the communities on religious lines and garner the Hindu votes."

Orissa has tough anti-conversion legislation which states that any religious leader intending to perform a conversion has to indicate the time and place of the ceremony to a magistrate in advance.

Christians have complained in the past about these laws and claim that the re-conversion ceremony makes a mockery of the law, since it was not registered in advance. Religious conversions to Christianity from Hinduism are a long-running grievance in Orissa.

In February, nine Christian women said they were stripped and tonsured for refusing to reconvert to Hinduism. The assailants then took the women to a distant Hindu temple where they were forced to undergo a purification and re-conversion ceremony.

## Chinese house churches gain recognition

NANJING, China (Compass) – In April 2002, the China Gospel Fellowship (CGF) attracted worldwide attention when 34 of its top leaders were kidnapped by the cult known as Eastern Lightning, also known as Lightning from the East (which preaches that Christ has already returned to China as a woman). Compass recently interviewed one of the leaders of this fast-growing house church movement and learned that all hostages were eventually released.

Since then, CGF has made efforts to root out the influence of Eastern Lightning from its churches with in-depth training. Relations with government authorities in Beijing have improved, to the point that CGF is no longer blacklisted as a "dangerous cult" and its members are able to worship openly.

The house church network of two million believers also conducts "migration evangelism," sending married couples out to remote rural areas to do pioneering evangelism.

*The Church of God in Chucarasi*

## Angry mob destroys church in Bolivian Andes

Bolivia (Compass) – An angry mob of Quechua-speaking Indians destroyed an evangelical church in a remote village in the Bolivian Andes on February 28 after beating a congregational elder unconscious.

Trouble began among the 140 inhabitants of Chucarasi during the annual *Carnaval* festival. Animist villagers observe the holiday with veneration of Christo-pagan icons, ritual dances and excessive drinking, customs designed to appease local deities. Families of the Church of God in Chucarasi declined to take part in Carnaval and spent the days of the festival tending their crops. Two days later, a severe hail storm struck, damaging fields and fueling animists' fears that evil spirits were punishing the community for the evangelicals' refusal to participate in Carnaval. The following night, ruffians attacked church elder Fortunato Bernal before completely dismantling the Church of God chapel.

At press time, an inter-denominational commission was working to negotiate a peaceful solution to the crisis. "We evangelicals want to establish a precedent in this community, showing that the law protects evangelical Christians as much as anyone else," said Church of God spokesman Abel Colque.

Theology

# By his stripes: understanding the atonement

**Harry der Nederlanden**

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* may have had some adverse effects by raising controversy, but not all controversy is bad. It is certainly a film that has aroused very different emotions and reflections, even among Christians. Besides sorting us out as viewers, it also drives us to reflect more deeply on the subject matter – the work of atonement that Christ accomplished on the cross.

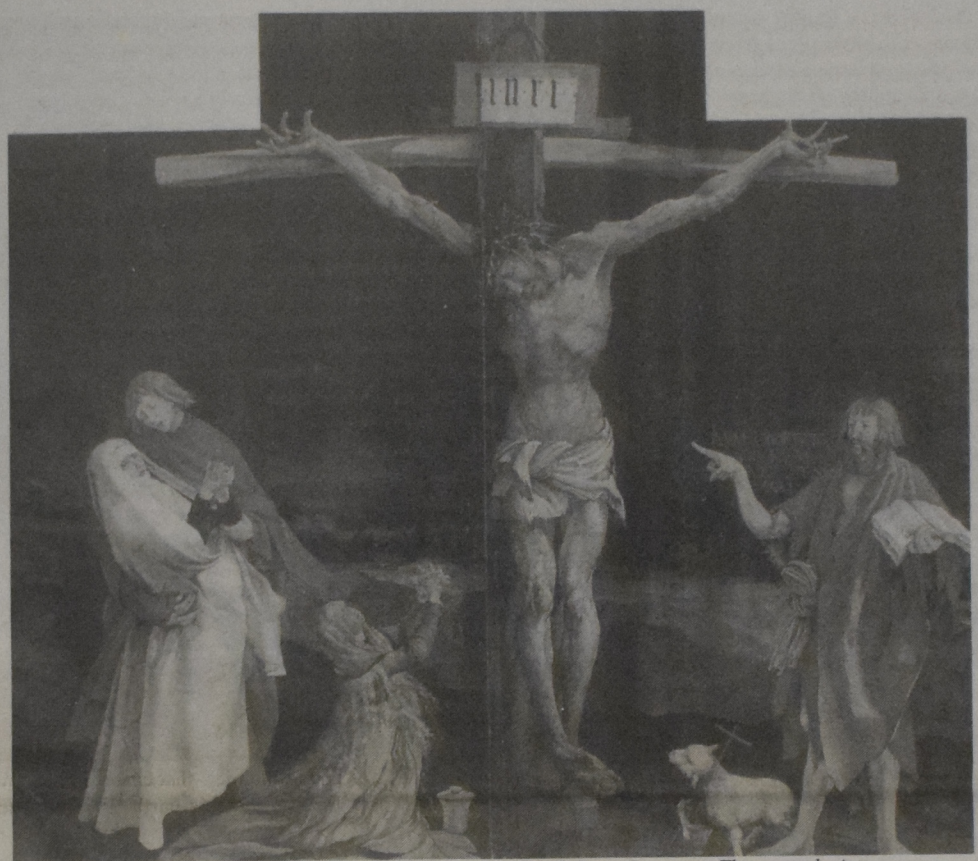
Behind Gibson's gory, violent representation of Jesus' last hours, there is a specific, and personal, view of the atonement that arises out of his Catholic faith. The first evangelicals who viewed the film were so overcome by its graphic "realism" they did not seem to notice it. Most of them simply saw through the film to the historical and theological reality, namely, that Jesus bore unspeakable torment and agony "for me."

Only later did some note that *The Passion* embodies a distinctive approach to the cross that has affinities with the Catholic view of the Mass as in some sense a repetition of Christ's sacrifice, and also of the spiritual exercise called the stations of the cross often done during Lent. It is not just certain additions Gibson made to the Gospel stories, such as those relating to Mary, that mark the film as Catholic but the central thrust of the whole: it insists that we enter into and identify with that suffering. It is by participating in it that we will be healed.

I'll overstate it here to make a point. The central message of Scripture is that Christ suffered and died *in our place*. In many ways the film reverses that: we identify with him in his suffering and take *his place* as it were. It's certainly not that Gibson denies the first, but the film is structured to bring about the second, often downplayed in Protestantism.

Gibson emblazons the point in words as well as images: "He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds [stripes] we are healed." This was the message that Gibson wanted to impress on our minds: the unspeakable magnitude of what Christ suffered for us.

Even some who share Gibson's view of the atonement as summed up in Isaiah, however, asked whether the graphic violence brings home God's great love or whether it puts too much emphasis on God's wrath. Other critics complained that *The Passion* illustrates one particular theory or model of the atonement, called the *satisfaction theory*, arguing that it is no longer appropriate for our time. They object to the cruelty and bloodiness of Gibson's film on theological grounds. The understanding of the atonement behind it, they suggest, does not provide an adequate picture of what happens in the atonement.



*Mathis Grunewald,* Crucifixion, *c.1510 Unterlinden Museum, Colmar Germany. The scene depicts desolation, with no comfort but that of faith.*

## Different theories of the atonement

None of us, not even the theologians, call to mind a specific theory of the atonement when we recall Christ's death on the cross – as we do especially on Good Friday and whenever we celebrate the Lord's supper. We think of the biblical story and the images associated with that story. The emotions these arouse in us are just as important as their appeal to our understanding.

But over Christianity's long history the atonement has not always been understood in the same way. The one Reformed believers are familiar with is one of several models that have emerged over the ages, and it only emerged in its essential outlines about 1000 years after Christ's death. It is one teaching that we have long shared with the Catholic Church, with somewhat different emphases.

Although nineteenth century liberalism, with its denial of the deity of Christ, put forward a different view, called the moral influence theory, orthodox believers in the West have by and large long embraced the satisfaction theory or model of the atonement.

From the testimony of many viewers, Protestant as well as Catholic, it is clear that for them Gibson's film did bring home to them in a graphic way the magnitude of Jesus' suffering in their stead, and they were deeply moved to penitence and gratitude.

Others were not. Some saw only the wrathful ("sadistic" was a word often used) God, and asked, 'Who is this God that demands such torture to have his sense of justice satisfied?' Such questions were sometimes posed by unbelievers, but not always by any means. Some, like Michael Coren, thought the focus on the physical torture that Jesus endured ended up obscuring rather than illuminating the meaning of his work on the cross, the atonement. What Coren said about Gibson's film more and more theologians are saying about the model of the atonement behind it – the satisfaction theory.

## Is there too great a focus on God's wrath?

The central meaning of the atonement has been a subject of debate for many years. In the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, a few decades ago a couple of theologians launched a strong attack on this view of the atonement because, they claimed, it turns us into spectators of a cosmic drama that occurs over our heads. They wanted a theory of the atonement that involves us more as believers.

Reformed theology and the satisfaction theory has always stressed that the work of Christ is substitutionary. He takes our place and suffers for us, so it's true that in a profound sense we are passive. In another sense, we are not – as Gibson illustrated by holding the spike driven into Jesus' palm in the film with his own hand. *We* crucified him.

In this model God's wrath and judgment has been pronounced on sin and on sinners from the time of Adam. Sin is an offense to God's holiness and justice. It demands punishment, a penalty. However, the debt is an infinite one. It is deserving of death. The penalty cannot be paid by us; we cannot even pay for our own sins, much less remove the curse on sin that stands between us and God. The only way that God's justice can be satisfied is for God himself in his Son to bear the penalty of sin in our place. By his obedience, suffering and death, he appeases the wrath of God and removes the hostility between us. By becoming our substitute as the sacrificial lamb, he takes our sins upon himself, and we are cleansed by his blood. The sentence of death no longer rests on us, for God accounts us righteous before him on the basis of Christ's obedience even unto death.

This is all so familiar to us that it's almost unnecessary for me to spell it all out. It's all there in the Bible isn't it? Maybe not, suggest a number of evangelical theologians. Some, especially some Mennonite theologians, object to the image of God central in this model. Doesn't it focus too much on God as a stern, cold, wrathful deity? And isn't the idea of justice as retributive, that is, as basically a law of tit-for-tat, a matter of punishment, at odds with the more biblical idea of justice as that which restores harmony and shalom? Moreover, to whom is the penalty paid – Satan or God himself (an old question)? If to God, why couldn't he just waive the penalty; after all, isn't the Lord a gracious, forgiving God?

Quite a number of feminist theologians (not just radical ones) have criticized the model too. It reinforces the idea of an absolute patriarch who keeps order by means of violence – meting out punishment – while those under his authority must count themselves deserving of every punishment, submitting to him in silent obedience. It thereby encourages believers to be passive and submissive, to endure abuse and suffering and thus to embrace the role of victim.

## Christus victor: the triumphant Lord

In place of this satisfaction or penal model of the atonement,

many point to the *Christus victor* model. This has always been the dominant model in Eastern Orthodoxy and is now being promoted not only by many Mennonite, feminist and liberation theologians but by many other evangelical theologians as well.

Responding to Gibson's gory spectacle, Frederica Mathew-Green, an Orthodox theologian, says, "Rather than poring over the details of Christ's suffering, earlier Christians averted their eyes. For them, she argues, the concept of *rescue* was the key: Christ is the hero who rescues the captives from an evil kidnapper. The focus is not on the wounds he picked up in the process but on the victory, not on his suffering and death but on his resurrection as victor over death. It was not until Anselm (about 1000 years ago), she says, that theology in the West "locked on the idea that Christ's death was directed to the Father."

*Christus victor* is the model around which Robert Webber constructed his book *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* and his liturgical program, *Ancient-Future Worship*. He argues that it was the model at the center of the church's worship, evangelism, education and witness for the first thousand years of its existence. Through his institute and worship workshops, he has exercised a wide influence, also in CRC circles.

Webber suggests that in the postmodern era the church should be seen as "the sign of *Christus victor*, the community of people where the victory over evil becomes present in and to this world."

In this model sin is not seen first of all as a personal debt or guilt but as a cosmic and corporate force – the powers and authorities that hold humanity in subjection, like an evil dictatorship. By his death and resurrection Christ binds Satan, disarms the powers and asserts his Lordship. By casting off the bonds of sin and death, he liberates not only individuals but the whole creation.

This model avoids talk of propitiating God's wrath, judgment, punishment for sin, penalty, and payment. Even sacrifice and suffering are mentioned only as wounds incurred on the path to victory. The central action of the atonement is directed against sin and evil rather than toward placating an angry God.

One thing I appreciate in this model is that it works on a cosmic and corporate plane, for the satisfaction model does, it seems to me, tend to focus on the removal of my personal guilt and pollution. But not necessarily so. Abraham Kuyper, for instance, clearly embraced the traditional model, but this didn't prevent him from celebrating the lordship of Christ over all of creation.

Christ Between Angels and Saints, *apse mosaic from San Vitale*

## A smorgasbord theology?

Webber suggests that the satisfaction model arose in response to the Medieval social order with its hierarchy in which powerless serfs were subject to an autocratic lord. Today in view of our problems with patriarchy, violence and abuse, we need to focus on different metaphors. This strikes me as a dangerous strategy (and doesn't explain the appeal of Gibson's film). We end up with a smorgasbord theology, in which we can pick which biblical metaphors to put center stage and which ones to push into the wings. It's a stupefying move, for it deprives the church of part of the understanding given to it by the Spirit himself in Scripture.

But theologians don't accuse one another of stupidity, they thank one another for deepening and enriching their (and the church's) understanding. The *Christus victor* model can do that – *if* it doesn't become a replacement for the traditional understanding and cause us to ignore the indispensable metaphors of that tradition. A starkly juridical view, one that reduces the atonement to a formal courtroom procedure, doesn't do justice to the rich variety of biblical metaphors either. But in good hands it pulls together motifs of sacrifice, ransom, penalty and so on that are scattered everywhere throughout the New Testament.

If we ignore, to take one example, Hebrews' explanation of Christ's sacrifice as a fulfilment of Old Testament sacrifices, we lop off much of Israel's worship instituted by God to point ahead to salvation in Jesus Christ. To ignore such motifs doesn't strike me as responsible use of Scripture.

Must we adopt one model to the exclusion of the other?

Not just Scripture, but the work of Christ in the atonement is inexhaustibly rich. It must always transcend our understanding and any theory or model we make to help our understanding. We can learn something from each of them. The Bible employs numerous different metaphors for sin: it is a stain, filth, disfigurement, a debt owed, blindness, disease, corruption, ignorance, enslavement to an alien power, alienation, distance, powerlessness, transgression, disobedience, rebellion, idolatry. Naturally, when it comes to spelling out what Christ did to overcome sin, Scripture uses a similarly broad range of metaphors – from enlightenment to liberation and giving eternal life. Christ's work is never described apart from what he is: he is the Light of the world, our Redeemer and Liberator, the bread of life, the Messiah, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Son of man, suffering servant, Lord and King, teacher, shepherd, healer, and, yes, Victor over the forces of evil.

Any model by its very nature abstracts from this rich diversity of images, making some more central than others. And it is good for us to be reminded of that. But the diversity of metaphors is not a license to pick and choose. We must listen to them all.

## Appreciating wrath and judgment

And Scripture, including the New Testament, is full of texts that speak of God's wrath against sin and unrighteousness. This doesn't mean that God is hostile toward us. On the contrary, it means that he hates that which ruins our fellowship with him, with one another and with his creation. Scripture again and again tells us that his justice and judgment is for us. Without his justice, life would be brutish, unbearable, in fact, impossible.

The wages of sin are death, says Paul. Sin is inherently lethal, destructive not only to our 'spiritual lives' but to those conditions – political, communal, legal, social and economic – that enable life to flourish on this earth. It is not God's violence that is exhibited on the cross, but the violence of sin and of the people and institutions ruled by sin. God's judgment is not just to protect his honor and holiness; it is to save us from the blinding, polluting, estranging, and enslaving violence that sin visits on God's creation and creatures.

But the root of all this is our rebellion against God. In Adam we are usurpers. We set up ourselves as the supreme judges instead of God. We first substituted our own judgment for his. And we are horrible judges, for in the attempt to set this world right, we are constantly enslaving, incarcerating and butchering one another. We have brought destruction and death into this world, and the creation that should praise and glorify God unceasingly is instead an offense, and the image-bearers he made to live in fellowship and joy with him instead make gods in their own image.

So it seems not at all improper in this age of genocide, gulags and refugee camps for us to listen to what Scripture says about God's wrath. All around the globe people are crying for justice and judgment. But, except for the grace of God in Christ Jesus, we are all part of this maelstrom of evil. He entered into our bloody history and our battered bodily humanity and became sin for us, bore that judgment so that God no longer sees us for the violent, bloody creatures we are but as his sons and daughters, cleansed by the blood of his Son, the Lamb without blemish. And by engrafting us in Christ, the Spirit gives us new hearts that are not brimming with violence.

Although I have deep reservations about Gibson's film, it does get one thing right: making the world new and removing man's sin is a violent, bloody process. It is often compared to childbirth and to going through fire. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper, the central symbols of the church, focus our minds on death. But not to linger there.

He arose a Victor from the dark domain. But he did so by paying the penalty for us, by suffering in our place the abandonment of hell. He arose and we arise with him empowered by his Spirit. He not only dresses us in his righteousness, he also creates good works for us to do as signposts of his now and coming Kingdom. And we may live in this world knowing that the power of sin and evil has been broken and one day his shalom will prevail in a new heaven and a new earth.

Alleluia! His the triumph, his the victory alone!

*Aaron: One Scapegoat for All*
*...woodcut by Chris Stoffel Overworde*

**Reflection**

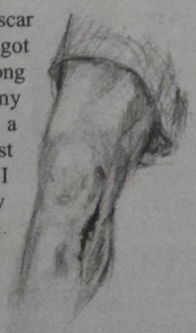
# Scars

**Ron de Boer**

When you grow up on a dairy farm in a family of boys, you get your fair share of scars. I can chronicle my life by the scars on my body.

We'll start with the palm on my left hand where the sharp end of my math pencil pierced my skin in second grade. Happy that the lunch bell had gone, and we would soon be able to fetch our lunch boxes, I crammed my math book into my desk, then tossed my pencil high in the air, intending to catch it on its vertical decline. Instead I sustained its sharpness when it flattened out in its descent to my desk. I clapped my hands firmly and drove the lead spike into my palm, breaking off the tip.

Not only did I spend the entire lunch hour with the school nurse, but my brothers later informed me that a red line would soon be snaking up my arm and I'd be dead by morning – if I was lucky to live that long. I survived lead poisoning, but not only do I have the scar where the sharp point pierced my palm, but there is also a distinct black smudge beneath the surface of my skin – a constant reminder of my foolishness. There are days when I stare at that black smudge and wonder if it will one day spring to life and forge a red path up my arm to my heart and kill me after all.



Then there's the scar on my left knee. I got that one going for a long bomb thrown by my older brother, Ken, a perfect spiral against a blue summer sky. I stretched out my hands as if I were Tony Gabriel of the Ottawa Roughriders; my eyes widened as the football spiraled straight for my chest; I leaped, then crashed straight into our white fence, busting the top board, scraping my shin on the middle board and flying "glass over tea kettle," as my mother used to say.

When the dust had settled and my brothers had stopped laughing, I was holding my knee where a half inch splinter stuck out of my skin. My mother immediately drove me to the hospital where a doctor shot needles into the wound then carefully plucked out the invading shards of wood. When I got home, my brothers, in all sincerity, informed me I had fumbled the ball.

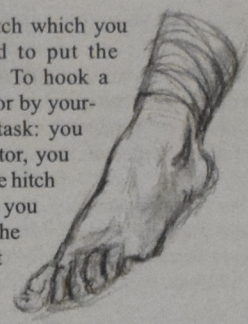
The scar on the left side of my chin hasn't seen the light of day in ten years since I grew the goatee. Back when I was eleven — pre-peach fuzz — I wore a different kind of goatee — a medical bandage I was awarded for a whole week after falling through the barn floor. The Band-aid was one of those dark brown jobbers. My mother stuck one end on my left cheek, stretched the Band-aid under my chin then stuck the other sticky side to my right cheek. I looked like one big pre-adolescent Happy Face.

This scar I blame on the hormones of my oldest brother, who was known for sneaking his girlfriend up to the haystack for a little, shall we say, private time. My brother, Doug, and I would collect green apples, burrow a little shelter in the hay stack elsewhere in the barn, and launch the apples at my brother and his girlfriend. We, of course, didn't like his girlfriend because she stole away our brother who went from an accessible sibling who loved to play road hockey to a mushy, giggly, tickling creature whenever Little Miss Prissy came around.

Following an immigrant family tradition, Harry was talking marriage at age sixteen. Perhaps that is what he was talking about in the hay. To throw us off his trail, he built a network of tunnels with the hay bales, each meant to lead us to a different point in the barn and away from his love nest. One such tunnel ended at a feeding hole where you throw bales down to the cows. Crawling quickly on my hands and knees, hoping to catch Harry and Bernadette in an impassioned embrace, I suddenly was free-falling to the dairy cows below where my chin kissed the cold concrete and split open like an apple being dropped onto a rock. When my chin healed, we, of course, declared all out war on Little Miss Prissy and the brother we used to look up to, but that's another story.

Which brings me to the scar I got on my left ankle after I ran over myself with the tractor. When I was in the eighth grade, my father kept me home from school to help harvest the corn. My job was to meet him at some point on the farm, where we exchanged wagons. He delivered to me the full wagon to be taken back to the barn to unload into the silo, and I delivered to him the empty wagon to be taken to the field, hooked up to the harvester and filled with corn.

It was during this exchange that I ran over myself. I was driving an old John Deere with a hand clutch which you shoved forward to put the tractor in drive. To hook a wagon to a tractor by yourself is no easy task: you back up the tractor, you jump off to lift the hitch into place, then you jump back onto the tractor to inch it back a bit more and so on.



After a while, I would get lazy. Standing between the tractor and wagon, I would bend down to lift the hitch with my left hand, then reach up with my right hand to nudge the hand clutch to inch the tractor backward so that I could drop in the pin. On one such short cut, I shoved the clutch ahead too far so that the tractor jerked back; it pinned me between the tractor fender and the wagon. The big tractor tire had turned me around and ridden up the bottom of my foot, over my heel and up the back of my leg.

Thankfully, my father had been delayed with a problem on his tractor and raced over to rescue me. I could tell by the bone sticking out that I had hurt it pretty badly, and the doctor agreed with me. I had broken it in two places and spent the next eight weeks sitting at the kitchen table perfecting my schoelbach game, which is also another story.

The jagged rather ugly scar that dents the bridge of my nose came from a butcher who called himself a doctor in Sioux Centre, Iowa when I was playing hockey for Dordt College back in the 80s. We were killing a penalty against South Dakota State University. I was the centreman. I took the draw and pulled it back to my defenseman. Just then I was tripped by the opposing team's center. I fell to the ice just as our defenseman wound up to take a slap shot and ice the puck. I can still see the puck coming, as if in slow motion, slicing through the air, then slicing through my nose. I took it square in the beak, as we used to say, and was rushed to the Sioux Center hospital when we arrived back on campus.

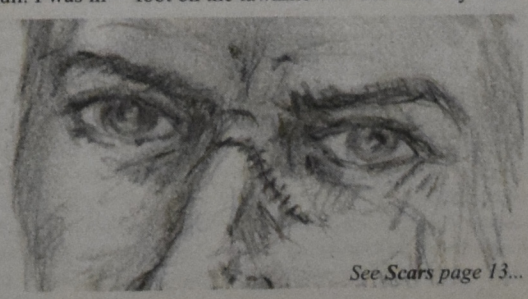
The doctor made it clear he didn't like hockey and proceeded to stitch my nose as if I had the feelings of a leather chair. The next morning was my very first student teaching assignment at Western Christian High School in neighboring Hull. I was introduced to the class after the Star Spangled Banner, and when I stood up to say hello, that poor impressionable group of adolescents who had never before seen a Canadian, collectively gasped at my Franken-steinian face. Refusing to return to Dr. Upholsterer after the wound had healed, I asked a teammate to take out my stitches, which is perhaps the reason I have what looks like a zipper running across the top of my nose.

The final scar on my body is the arrowhead — faintly visible — above my left eyebrow. This scar came courtesy from a twenty year-old lawn-mower sold to me during my first year as a teacher by a cheap fellow teacher. He had just hauled his shiny new Lawn Boy out of the trunk of his station wagon and into his garage. For $20, I received an oil-stained beast that cut my grass exactly once before the pull cord broke off the fly wheel when I yanked it one Saturday morning. All the while promising myself to put a tack on this teacher's chair on Monday, I carefully unscrewed and removed the cover to the lawnmower to inspect the damage. I removed the fly wheel and then had a brainstorm. I could wind the cord that was dangling from my right hand, around the fly wheel which was in my left hand. I then could place the fly wheel back on the blade spindle housing to rotate the engine to life, and I'd be all set. I wound the cord around the fly wheel; I placed the fly wheel back on the spindle housing; I pulled with all my might, hoping the engine would roar to life….

Nobody told me that fly wheels like to fly. When I pulled the cord, I lifted the fly wheel off its mount so that it flew like a Frisbee and sliced my forehead open just above my eyebrow. I staggered backward and fell into the shed, toppling over my bike. I could already feel the blood leaking down into my eyes. I ran into the house, clutching my forehead, blood trickling between my fingers down my face. Of course this was the day when the Band-Aid box was empty, so I folded a length of toilet paper into a neat square, got my shin pad tape out of my hockey bag, and taped a big X across the toilet paper. After recovering my wits for a few minutes, I looked out the window at the half mowed lawn.

That lawnmower was not going to defeat me.

I rummaged around in the basement then emerged out the back door with my baseball glove. I found the blood-stained fly wheel in some weeds by the neighbor's fence, tied the cord around it and placed it back on the spindle housing. I placed my foot on the lawnmower then held my base-



*See Scars page 13...*

**Reflection**

# He Carried Our Sorrows

Jacob Revius (1586-1658)

It is not the Jews, Lord Jesus, who did the crucifying,
Nor those who treacherously forced you before the court to stand,
Nor those who spat you in the face unbridled in contempt,
Nor those who bound, and wounded you near to dying,

It is not the soldiers who, fiercely fisted,
Did lift up the reed and raised the hammer in practiced drill,
Or erected that cursed tree on Calvary hill,
or together for your robe rolled dice in argument twisted:

It is I, O Lord, it is I who did to you this deed,
I am the heavy tree that overloaded your weakened legs and feet,
I am the chafing rope by which you were tightly bounded,
The nail and the spear, the scourge striking you again and again,
The blood-drenched crown your head carried in pain:
*For all this happened, alas, because my sins abounded*

Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* raised the question: "Who really killed Jesus?" Early in the 17th century, the well known Dutch poet Jacob Revius struggled with the dramatic suffering. In old-Dutch language, he used graphic and moving words not dissimilar to Gibson's visual portrayal close to 400 years later, to present Jesus' death to us and comes to the heart of the matter. His magnificent poem *Hy droeg onse smerten,* is to this day still often quoted or used at Easter time in the churches of the Reformation in The Netherlands.

With the scholarly help of the Rev. G. Heersink (Ret.) of Peterborough, who has the old-Dutch version in his files, I have translated it and take personal responsibility for any resultant imperfections, given that elsewhere Revius' works may well have been translated by others more competent.

Ralph L. De Groot
Peterborough

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

## Scars...*continued from p.12*

ball glove up to catch the fly wheel should it fly off again. After several pulls, the lawnmower coughed to life, farting out a blue cloud of oil.

I immediately began pushing that old lawnmower around the lawn, feeling for the first time the faintness that a head injury could bring. Just as I was stumbling along the hedge, my wife, Karen, walked around the corner with a bag of groceries. This was our first year of marriage, and this was our first house. Saturday mornings in your first house in your first year of marriage are supposed to look like the pictures in the Canadian Tire catalogue. We're supposed to be wearing clean golf shirts and big smiles while we snip and repair things.

Even though I had already given her several reasons to regret ever marrying the guy in the powder blue tuxedo smiling awkwardly at the front of the church a year prior, Karen still wasn't prepared for the sight she saw. There I was staggering around the yard, pushing the lawnmower with a baseball glove on my left hand and a bloodied four by four inch square of toilet paper hockey-taped to my forehead. I looked like a modern version of the bloody ghost of Banquo in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*!

Then Karen did something I've seen hundreds of times since: she rolled her eyes and disappeared into the house.

My only hope all these years later is that the pull cord on the new Lawn Boy purchased by my cheap-Dutchman-teacher-friend will one day break. He will lift the lid off, tie the cord around the fly wheel then take one off the skull himself. When it happens, a warm breeze will blow in my face, and I will know that all is well in the world again.

♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦♦

It's sort of fun to tell stories of our lives by pointing to our scars. Perhaps you have trouble believing my stories because you can't see the scars for yourself. If so, you'd be called a doubting Thomas, the disciple who had to see Jesus' scars before believing he was alive after his resurrection.

Perhaps sometimes you doubt his story, too. But look at his scars for a minute. See the dents on his forehead where they jammed the crown of thorns on him? Look at the scars on his shoulders where the skin peeled away while he carried the cross toward Calvary. Trace your fingers over the holes in his hands and feet where they rammed the long spikes through his skin and bones. Imagine the pain he endured at each tamp of the soldier's hammer. Put your hand in the hole in his side where they stabbed at him and perhaps dug around to make sure he was dead.

Do you see them? Are they real to you? Jesus said to Thomas after showing his doubting disciple his scars, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

While the scars on our bodies tell the story of our lives, Jesus' scars not only tell of his life, but yours and mine, too. He sustained those scars for no other reason but to save you and me. You are blessed if you believe his story without having seen his scars.

# Reclaiming Easter

**IntangibleThings**

**Heidi VanDerSlikke**

A grim caricature comes to mind for many Christians when they hear the word "Calvinist." It (unfairly) conjures up the image of a somber-faced curmudgeon, stoically enduring two services per Sabbath on pews as rigid as his/her heart, espousing the saved-by-grace mantra, all the while currying divine favor through diligent works and dogmatic self-denial. We are known for confessing sins not yet committed and paying endless penance for those gone by. It is a joyless picture, an ugly stereotype.

To my surprise, I recently discovered myself fitting more and more into this unhappy mold, far removed from what a true Calvinist, or more accurately, a Reformed believer should be. At first I wasn't even aware of the steadily depleting joy in my heart. I learned of it while flipping randomly through the pages of my journal. I was taken aback by the emerging pattern of unforgiveness for myself in entries over the past six months or so.

I haven't lost sight of the holiness of God, and I would never minimize the importance of a doctrine like Total Depravity. Especially at this time of Lent, it is fitting that we should remember the necessity of the sufferings and death of Christ as a direct result of our sins. The growing trend among Christians to think of themselves as worthy of God's love rather than his wrath is disturbing. Some so called "Christian" seminaries and colleges are teaching the heresy that there was no atonement in Christ's sacrifice, only the perfect model of love in action.

### The joy of salvation

That being said, once we are regenerate people, standing in the righteousness of Christ, we are forgiven sinners. If we really believe that Christ died for our sins, it stands to reason that God must truly love us, and that should be cause for great personal joy. Our story as redeemed people doesn't end at the crucifixion, it begins at the resurrection. With this in mind, my prayers began to take a new direction. I asked God to restore the joy of his salvation within me.

One day I came upon a suggestion in a book entitled Champagne for the Soul, by Mike Mason. The author is a Christian familiar with depression and addiction, who chronicles his search for joy in this slim volume. He writes, "Now answer for yourself: What is the gospel? Keep asking until the answer that comes provokes an eruption of joy."

What is the gospel? That's easy. Kind of a no-brainer for someone who's been sitting in church for as long as I have. The gospel in a nutshell: Jesus Christ, Son of God – fully human, fully divine came to earth, lived a sinless life in perfect obedience to his Father, even unto death on the cross to pay for the sins of his people. Then he was resurrected as the firstfruits of the dead, so that all who believe in him as Savior will be resurrected with him.

I reflected on the beauty of this act of sacrifice and redemption. I pictured Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane the night before he died (John 17). He prayed not only for his disciples, but for those who "will believe" because of the disciples' witness. He referred to us collectively as those given to him by the Father. And suddenly I realized that I am part of God's gift to Jesus.

My worth has nothing to do with my wealth, health or personal attributes. I am valuable because I was created by God, and given by him to his cherished Son, Jesus. Christ treasures the gifts of his Father so much that he willingly laid his life down in order to preserve them. Consider what this means in terms of how God feels about you. No wonder the Bible refers to the "joy" of God's salvation.

Reformed Christians recognize God's election of his people. We know that we are undeserving recipients of his grace. Our struggle with sin continues as long as we have breath in our bodies. But his grip on us is sure, and his faithfulness will see us through this life and into the next. We are his precious children and we have every reason in the world to celebrate Easter. Living in joy is how we accomplish God's purpose for us – to bring glory to his name.

*Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com*

**Litany**

# Who do you say I am? An Easter litany

**Leader:** We honor you, Jesus Christ! We celebrate who you are and what you did for us. We remember how you were received when you came to this earth to die for us: the stumbling, yet growing faith of the disciples; the murderous rejection of the Jewish religious leaders; the cowardly, political maneuvering of Pilate; and the tearful, resurrection joy of Mary Magdalene. Help us to respond in faith to the question you asked your disciples so long ago, "Who do you say I am?"

**Reader 1:** "When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?'
**Reader 2:** "They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'
**Reader 1**: "'But what about you? he asked. 'Who do you say I am?'
**Reader 3**: "Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matt. 16:13-16).

**Sing:** You Are The King of Glory
*You are the King of glory.*
*You are the Prince of Peace.*
*You are the Sun of righteousness*
*with healing in your wings.*
*Angels bow down before you,*
*worship and adore.*
*You are the Lord of heaven and earth*
*now and forevermore.*
*Hosanna Son of David.*
*Hosanna Prince of Peace.*
*Glory to God in the highest.*
*Jesus Messiah reigns.*

**Leader:** When Jesus raised Lazarus from death, many people believed in Jesus. But the Jewish religious leaders did not. Concern for their political status drove them to hateful thoughts about Jesus, and later to murderous actions.
**Reader 2**: "Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. 'What are we accomplishing?' they asked. 'Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away our place and our nation.'
**Reader 3**: "Then one of them, named Caiphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, 'You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish.' So from that day on they plotted to take his life" (John 11:47-50, 53).

**Sing**: Ah, Holy Jesus, How Have You Offended
*Ah, holy Jesus, how have you offended,*
*that mortal judgment has on you descended?*
*By foes derided, by your own rejected,*
*O most afflicted!*

**Leader:** When the Jews brought Jesus to Pilate, he declared Jesus innocent three times. But his concern for his own political skin warped his sense of justice. He wavered from what he knew to be true – that Jesus was innocent – and he handed Jesus over to be crucified.
**Reader 2:** "From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, 'If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caeser. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar.'
**Reader 3:** "When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). 'Here is your king,' Pilate said to the Jews.
**Reader 2:** "But they shouted, 'Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!'
**Reader 3:** "'Shall I crucify your king?' Pilate asked.
**Reader 2**: "'We have no king but Caesar,' the chief priests answered.
**Reader 3:** "Finally Pilate handed him over to be crucified" (John 19:12-13, 14b-16a).

**Sing:** O Sacred Head Now Wounded
*O sacred head, now wounded,*
*with grief and shame weighed down,*
*now scornfully surrounded*
*with thorns, your only crown.*
*O sacred head, what glory*
*and blessing you have known!*
*Yet, though despised and gory,*
*I claim you as my own.*

**Leader:** Mary Magdalene loved and adored Jesus. She stood vigil at the foot of the cross when Jesus hung there, ridiculed and shamed.

**Sing:** When I Survey The Wondrous Cross
*When I survey the wondrous cross*
*on which the Prince of glory died,*
*my richest gain I count but loss,*
*and pour contempt on all my pride.*

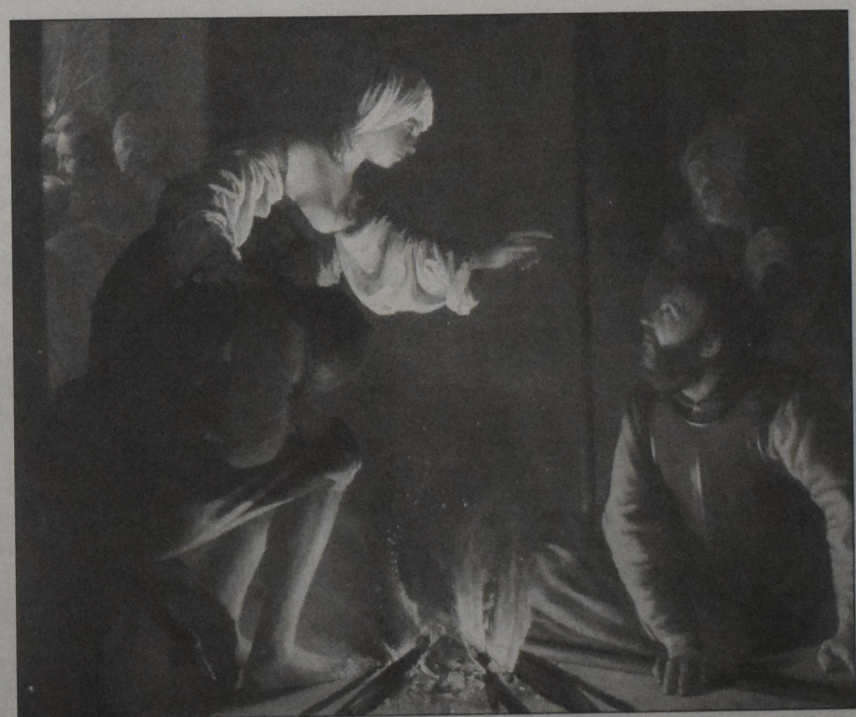
**Leader:** On the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.
**Reader 2:** "Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept she bent over to look into the tomb, and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.
**Reader 3:** "They asked her, 'Woman, why are you crying?'
**Reader 2:** "'They have taken my Lord away,' she said, 'and I don't know where they have put him.' At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.
**Reader 1:** "'Woman,' he said, 'why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?'
**Reader 2:** "Thinking he was the gardener, she said, 'Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him.'
**Reader 1:** "Jesus said to her, 'Mary.'
**Reader 2**: "She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, 'Rabboni!' (which means Teacher).... Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: 'I have seen the Lord!'" (John 20:11-16, 18b).

**Sing:** He Is Lord
*He is Lord! He Is Lord!*
*He is risen from the dead and He is Lord!*
*Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess*
*that Jesus Christ is Lord!*

**Leader:** The disciples, religious leaders, Pilate and Mary Magdalene each made a decision about who Jesus was. Jesus asks us, too, "Who do you say I am?"
**Reader 1:** "Then Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty'" (John 6:35).
**All:** Jesus, you are the bread of life!
**Reader 1:** "When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (John 8:12).
**All:** Jesus, you are the light of the world!
**Reader 1:** "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).
**All:** Jesus, you are the good shepherd!
**Reader 1:** "Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die'" (John 11:25).
**All:** Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life!

**Sing:** A Shout Rings Out, A Joyful Voice
*A shout rings out, a joyful voice:*
*"Jerusalem, arise, rejoice!"*
*A glorious morning breaks the night;*
*the Son of God is risen with might.*

**All:** Jesus, you are God's own Son. God loved the world so much that he sent you here. Anyone who believes in you will not perish, but have eternal life. Filled with resurrection joy, like Mary Magdalene, we praise you!



*"You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." John 18:17 "Denial of St. Peter" by Hendrik Terbrugghen, Dutch, 1588-1629*

# Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

## The reality of Mel's brutality- a hindrance to our faith?

*Like a father saying about his sick child, "I'd do anything to make you well," God finally calls his own bluff and does it. Jesus Christ is what God does, and the cross (is) where he did it.* Frederick Buechner

A few years ago I attended a parenting workshop in which the facilitator repeatedly used God as a role model for a loving parent. Not only do I remember thinking how unhelpful the comparison was for the average harried parent, I remember looking around the room at the participants wondering if I was the only one who was struck by the irony of her example in terms of what God ultimately demanded of his Son, as this workshop was part of an abuse awareness conference!

Since I am not one to leave the irony of a situation unrecognized I questioned her use of God as a parenting example considering what he put his Son through. Visibly startled she quickly replied she did not see God as abusive and carried on. I wondered, at that time, why she did not remind me that Jesus and God were one of the same and in reality. He sacrificed himself for us. Is that not the usual way we "justify" the suffering and death of Jesus?

### Crawling on the cross

Last month I wrote it would be easy to criticize *The Passion of the Christ* for its violence. Yet, that is what I must do.

I saw the film *The Passion of the Christ* hoping to meet Christ at the Cross. But after watching two hours or more of relentless cruelty I realized I had come face to face with humanity's propensity for evil. More than one hundred and twenty minutes of looking in the faces of laughing, jeering, and violent men participating in humiliating, demeaning and dehumanizing an unprotesting lone man was enough to lose hope of a better world. Nor was it gratifying to watch a bloody, beaten and thorn-gored Christ literally crawl onto the cross! Is this what Mel Gibson thought we needed to see?

### Breeding acceptable violence

I cannot help but wonder what it is about Christianity that breeds its own sense of acceptable violence. I think of the aggressive Crusades, the torturous Inquisition, the savage witch burning and all the other kinds of "acceptable" killings that have taken place in the name of God throughout history. How does all of that happen? What might we be missing in the gospel message? I believe we need to rethink whether the reality and intent of Jesus' suffering and dying for our sins warrants making this gruesome film. We also may want to rethink encouraging people to see it. I cannot imagine viewing this film and feeling cleansed upon its conclusion.

The bombardment on my senses by the violence of *The Passion of the Christ* was overwhelming. There was no room to bring my own redemptive self into the story. Yet, I stayed with it and kept hoping for some "let up" of the descending darkness on the screen. In the end, Jesus' resurrection did nothing for me and I left the theatre feeling eerily depressed and contaminated. Throughout the following days disturbing images of leering and jeering faces as well as Jesus' most humiliating moments intensified these feelings. I felt dirty and despondent because of what I had seen. I even wondered if this is how abuse victims feel.

### Eclipse of compassion and cruelty

Our theology of atonement tells us we all sinned and therefore we all are responsible for Jesus' death. And so, we should be grateful for his suffering. The problem with this view is that we personalize evil to our own sin and do not grab a-hold of the depth of evil that is so much part of our world.

As Christians, we should feel disturbed by Jesus' suffering because the scourging and the crucifixion are acts of abomination. God's decision for the need of an atonement for universal sin does not make the Roman's chosen form of punishment for criminals acceptable for mass viewing the way Mel Gibson has chosen to produce it under the banner of "reality" or "redemptive." The film has no artistic merit, nor does it develop thought-provoking perspectives. It is a simplistic and voyeuristic tale of a gory battle between good and evil with some amateur special effects thrown in for good measure.

At the same time, the film continues to remind us that God has chosen to eclipse our eternal salvation with his son's savage scourging and his temporarily God-forsaken crucifixion. What does this say about God? How can we accept his compassion and not question the cruelty?

### A paradigm shift?

What if various Christian leaders had not gone along with *The Passion of the Christ*? What if they condemned the violence in it? Where would we be now? How would the secular world have reacted if we as Christians would have spoken out against the cruelty (but also not blaming the Jews) that was part and parcel of Jesus' suffering and death and not rationalized it away with the theology of substitution or atonement or even the Trinity?

What if we forced ourselves to struggle with the reality that God chose to eclipse cruelty with compassion. What would we learn about God and about us? Could it be that we may need to go beyond traditional theology to have a deeper understanding of what this is all about?

*Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.*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# Pope's poems join best-seller lists

**Jonathan Luxmoore**

Warsaw, (ENI) — Pope John Paul II has long been a poet, but now a rare volume of his poetry that includes reflections on his own life and death, has sold over a million copies after being translated into 17 languages since its publication a year ago.

In the Pope's native Poland alone, 600,000 copies have been bought, and an initial print-run sold out within days of its simultaneous March 2003 release in Rome and Krakow, the Vatican said in a statement.

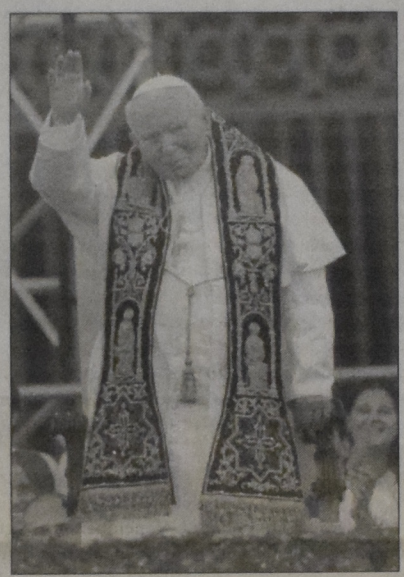
The Vatican says that its Biblioteca Editrice publishing house had sold 30,000 copies of "Roman Triptych: Meditations of John Paul II," with a further 20,000 English-language copies being sold in the United States.

The announcement on the success of the book came shortly before John Paul II became on March 10 the world's third longest-serving Pope.

A Vatican TV video about the poetry collection, featuring a complete reading of the text with images from the Sistine Chapel in Rome, was also issued, along with several bilingual editions using the Polish original, written in Rome and Castelgandolfo in late 2002.

The collection, published with an introduction by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, is the first by the Pope since his October 1978 election as pontiff.

A previous volume of poems, "Easter Vigil," written by the Pope when he used his Polish name Karol Wojtyla between 1950 and 1966, was published in 1979 and remains in print. The Pope's plays and writings on theatre, published in English in 1987, have also remained on sale in Poland, while a separate collection of his pre-papal poems was published in the United States in 1998.



*On October 16th , Pope John Paul II celebrated his 25th anniversary as the head of the Roman Catholic Church.*

# We are being heard

**Wilma Jonkheer**

I dream of a world where the store fronts in our shopping malls portray elegance and honor alone and where exposed skin no longer disgraces the walls.

I dream of newsstands that feature the strength and joy and celebration of life-long commitments in marriage.

But until that time I will continue to express my concern to the management of our malls and the head offices of the various stores.

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the masses, thinking "I am only one voice." But for each person that speaks up, there are one thousand others who silently agree. It can be a lonely ride up the elevator to the administration office of a mall, but once inside I know the words will be given to me as though I had rehearsed them days before. I am in the service of the King of kings.

I have found that my concern is usually well-received. The staff have families and care about the future of our society. I have received a number of calls from one advertising company that my concern has been taken seriously.

I will never forget how after several complaints about the display of pornography at a local gas station, I wrote a letter of protest to the management right there on the premises. As I balanced the notepad on the candy rack, the Spirit moved my hand across the paper. The pornography was removed.

It took one person – Martin Luther King – to speak up against racial discrimination. It took only one person – Terry Fox – and one leg to run the Marathon of Hope against cancer. It took only one person – the Lamb of God – to redeem the world from sin.

When I recently called the head office of a ladies fashion store and asked if they had received other calls of concern, I was told, "Well, we had one call from Alberta, one from Manitoba, and one from Ontario, and we take each one into consideration when we plan our next promotion."

Each one of us is only one voice, but we are being heard.

Together we can become one mighty chorus that resounds over the face of the continent.

# Violence does not have last word

*Meditation on Psalm 20*

**Pope John Paul II**

VATICAN CITY (Zenit.org) The final invocation, "Lord, grant victory to the king; answer when we call upon you" of Psalm 20 reveals to us its origin. We find ourselves before a royal Psalm of ancient Israel, proclaimed in the temple of Zion during a solemn rite. In it is invoked the divine blessing above all "in time of distress" (v 2), that is, at the time the whole nation is overwhelmed by profound anguish because of the nightmare of war. In fact, chariots and horses are evoked (v 8) which seem to advance on the horizon; the king and the people confront them with their trust in the Lord, who places himself on the side of the weak, the oppressed and the victims of the arrogance of the conquerors.

It is easy to understand that Christian tradition has transformed this Psalm in a hymn to Christ the King, the "Anointed One" par excellence, "the Messiah" (v 7). He does not come into the world with armies, but with the power of the Holy Spirit, and launches the final attack against evil and deception, against arrogance and pride, against lies and egoism. One can perceive the profound echo of the words Christ pronounced when addressing Pilate, emblem of the earthly imperial power: "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice" (John 18:37).

Examining the setting of this Psalm, we see that it reflects a liturgy celebrated in the temple of Jerusalem. On the scene appears the assembly of the children of Israel, who pray for the king, leader of the nation. What is more, at the beginning one can perceive the rite of a sacrifice, as the sacrifices and holocausts offered by the sovereign to the "God of Jacob" (v 2), who does not abandon his "anointed" (v 7), but protects and supports him.

The prayer is characterized by the conviction that the Lord is the source of security: He comes to respond to the confident prayer of the king and of the whole community to which he is tied by the bond of the covenant. The climate is certainly that of a warlike event, with all the fears and risks it awakens. The Word of God is not presented, therefore, as an abstract message, but as a voice that adapts itself to the small and great miseries of humanity. For this reason, the Psalm reflects military language and the atmosphere that prevails over Israel in times of war (v 6), thus adapting itself to the feelings of the man in difficulty.

In the text of the Psalm, verse 7 marks a turn. While the preceding verses express implicitly petitions addressed to God, verse 7 affirms the certainty of having been heard: "Now I know victory is given to the anointed of the Lord. God will answer him from the holy heavens." The Psalm does not specify what has been the sign by which he has come to know this.

In any case, it expresses clearly a contrast between the position of the enemies, who base themselves on the material strength of their chariots and horses, and the position of the Israelites, who put their trust in God and who, therefore, come out victorious. It recalls the famous passage of David and Goliath: Before the arms and arrogance of the Philistine warrior the young Jew confronts him in the name of the Lord who protects the weak and defenseless. In fact, David says to Goliath: "You come against me with sword and spear and scimitar, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies ... it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves. For the battle is the Lord's" (1 Samuel 17:45,47).

Despite its historical character connected to war, the Psalm can become an invitation to not allow oneself ever to be captured by the attraction of violence. Isaiah also exclaimed: "Woe to those who ... depend upon horses: who put their trust in chariots because of their number, and in horsemen because of their combined power, but look not to the Holy One of Israel nor seek the Lord!" (Isaiah 31:1).

In the face of all kinds of violence, the just man resists with faith, kindness, forgiveness, the offer of peace. The Apostle Paul warned Christians: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil; be concerned for what is noble in the sight of all" (Romans 12:17).

And the historian of the Church of the first centuries, Eusebius of Caesarea (who lived between the third and fourth centuries), in commenting on our Psalm, widens his view to include the evil of death that the Christian knows that he can conquer by the power of Christ: "All adverse powers and the enemies of God, hidden and visible, faces that flee from the Savior himself, will fall. But all who receive salvation, will rise from their former ruin. Because of this Simeon said: "This one is placed for the fall and resurrection of many," that is, for the ruin of his adversaries and enemies, and for the resurrection of those who, once fallen, have been resurrected by him" (PG 23,197).

*[Translation by ZENIT of an address given by Pope John Paul II at a general audience, which he dedicated to a reflection on Psalm 20.]*

# The UN-UNITED NATIONS (2)

**Harry Antonides**

*The greatest threat to the future of international order is the use of force in the absence of a Security Council mandate.*
(Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General)

Whatever the outcome of the current feud in the Security Council, one fact already stands out: the United Nations must not continue as it is. Far from being part of the solution to the numerous threats to peace, the 58-year-old organization may have become part of the problem....

*Anyone familiar with the so-called "international system" would know about its bureaucratic inefficiency, political ineptitude, and widespread corruption.*
(Amir Taheri, March 14,2003)

The world press has incessantly badgered the American leadership for what it calls its unilateralist action. Never mind that the Americans swiftly accomplished what the critics said should not and could not be done: free the Iraqis from the monstrous Saddam regime. And they accomplished this without the predicted massive casualties and destruction of the Iraqi infrastructure. Did the critics change their tune after Iraq was liberated?

No, the naysayers are still naysayers. And they now insist that the one country that had the stamina and the means to do what should be done – the elimination of the Saddam regime – is the obstacle to solving the problems of Iraq. The Americans are told that they must shrink into the background so that a legitimate coalition, now led by the United Nations, can set matters straight.

The question is whether such faith in the UN is well placed. What is there in the history and its current activities that would instill such confidence in this organization?

## Achilles Heel

The Achilles heel of the UN is that its member states have diametrically opposing ideas and practices. It is a house that is divided against itself, and such a house cannot stand. At the heart of the division within the UN is the conflict between the free and the non-free nations. It is helpful to distinguish between two different kinds of nations in the latter category.

First, there are the desperately poor nations where living conditions are wretched, governments evil, and the people powerless. Haiti readily comes to mind. These nations do not constitute a direct threat to the West for they lack the means to conquer and destroy.

Second, there are other poor nations who are dominated by an all-consuming ideology, such as Communism, militant Islam, or some other totalitarian ideology that motivates them to strive for (world) conquest. If such countries succeed in obtaining military power and/or the know-how to master the technology of destruction, they are a threat to the rest of the world.

Of course, this is too simple a scheme; the lines are blurred and over time nations change. (Think of the Soviet Union, and in a different category, South Korea). But there is some benefit in keeping this somewhat rough sketch in mind when trying to figure out the lay of the land. For one, our relations to the two different kinds of nations must of necessity be different.

Simply put, we must extend a helping hand to the poor who mean us no harm.

But the poor nations whose leaders have managed for a number of different reasons – depending on geography, resources, political ruthlessness, and technological savvy – to build a powerful war machine or create a cadre of ruthless terrorists must be treated differently. They must be recognized as a real or potential threat against which we must be prepared to defend ourselves or to defeat them.

## A Noble Purpose Gone Awry

The United Nations was established for a noble purpose: to avoid deadly conflicts between nations, and instead to foster cooperation among all. No one in his right mind can take issue with that. And no one should ignore the good intentions of many nor the good that has been done, especially in relieving poverty and providing help when disasters strike.

However, the UN is bedeviled in its attempt to build a more peaceful and just world because it is unable and unwilling to openly challenge its internal divisions. The UN leadership does not dare or does not want to clearly delineate between nations and causes that are good and those that are evil. This is made worse by the bloc formation within the UN and the manipulation that occurs when blocs are able to gang up on each other.

Because of the muddle at the basis of the UN, much of the resources and energies are eaten up in endless conferences producing empty pronouncements that say nothing or say the wrong thing. The UN is a talking shop where many professional bureaucrats are busy looking busy and enjoying the good life.

But it gets worse. To do good in a world where there is much evil requires that one must have a standard of the good. But in the absence of such a standard, words such as freedom, democracy, justice, and now especially equality, are bandied about without any agreement as to what they really mean.

Multiculturalism now is the new god at whose temple we are all called to worship, but this is a loaded term with different meanings. It can simply refer to the reality that people of different races and beliefs should and can live together in peace.

But it also has a very different, in my view onerous, meaning. It now is often used in the sense that there is no absolute truth, and that no culture or belief may claim to be better than others. The right word for this is relativism, which is only a brief way station to outright nihilism. One outcome is the kind of gobbledygook of which the following is an example.

In April 2001, the UN Human Rights Commission adopted a resolution urging member states to respect "the rich and diverse nature of the community of the world's democracies" while "bearing in mind that each society and every context has its own indigenous and relevant democratic institutional traditions" There is "no one model of democracy." The Commission concluded "therefore we must not seek to export any particular model of democracy."

(Take that, you Americans, who in your arrogance pretend that you are able to export your kind of democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan! The contemporary term for such pretense is imperialism – the equivalent of the unpardonable sin.)

I suppose this is the reason South African President Thabo Mbeki refuses to condemn the "indigenous and relevant democratic institutional traditions" that are now destroying his neighboring country Zimbabwe.

It is an open secret that underlying the problems of the world and of the UN is the very real conflict between the democracies and the one-party tyrannies. But given its muddled starting point, the UN is confused about the deepest cause of this division in the world. The problem is not only inaction and irresolution, but also the overturning of the meaning of such terms as freedom, democracy, and justice.

This topsy-turviness is the reason that the UN allows some despicable characters and regimes to use this organization as a launching pad to fire their rockets of vitriol at the (Western) democracies. In this process, the US is invariably castigated as the worst offender.

## Tower of Babel

Representatives of one-party regimes such as China, Cuba, Sudan, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, the Palestinian Authority and a host of others are adept at manipulating their UN membership to gloss over their own blatant and often murderous human rights violations. At the same time they vilify the Western democracies, especially the US. and Israel, for their alleged misdeeds. This is how the following events are accepted as business as usual at this Tower of Babel, and this is only a small sampling.

– In early 2003 Libya, notorious human rights violator and implicated in the destruction of Pan Am flight 103 in 1988, won the vote to the chairmanship of the UN Human Rights Commission. Canadian ambassador Christopher Westdal had this typically UN-type comment: "This is the real world and these are the real governments. One can't boycott reality."

– In May 2003 Iraq was slated to chair a UN conference on disarmament. This was the same country that had defied 12 years of UN resolutions and had broken its agreement to disarm after the first Gulf War in 1991.

– One of the most bizarre demonstrations of the upside-down mentality at the UN was the conference on human rights in Durban, South Africa in 2001. This ponderously named World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, and its companion NGOs, used this occasion to demonize especially Israel and the US. Yasir Arafat and Fidel Castro (who was treated as a hero) gave free rein to their hatred. The South African foreign minister described Cuba as "the most democratic country in the world." The flagrant abuses of human rights in Arab countries were ignored, while privately participants applauded the suicide attacks on Israel.

It is a grave error to participate and thus give credence to the monstrous lies emanating from this kind of conference. Even its name was a lie. The Americans did the right thing by refusing to attend. Canada sent its delegation, although it was reported that the Canadian foreign minister "was scathing in his comments." (Arch Puddington, "The Wages of Durban," *Commentary*, November 2001.)

I suppose that's better than nothing, but it should not be forgotten that the double-talk and outright falsehoods for which the UN is a willing carrier are far from harmless. They have a way of poisoning everything they touch. They not only disastrously hobble the UN. What is worse, they degrade the very basis of civility without which relations among persons and nations cannot be made whole. This is why I agree with the stark conclusion of David Warren, the intrepid Christian columnist of the *Ottawa Citizen*, when he writes:

"In the final view, the evil of the UN consists in its having appropriated to itself the very ideals of human co-operation and solidarity, our hopes for international order and peace. By making all effort towards such ends dependent upon an apparatus of bottomless cynicism and corruption, the UN subverts those ideals and hopes."

Sad but true.

*UN General Assembly*

## Opinion

*Yes .... but*

Bert Hielema

# Inflation, deflation and bubble trouble

Call me a contrarian. Last week I read that consumer confidence is up. For me that is a sign for caution. Consumer confidence always centres on money for which only two directions are possible: up or down, either worth more or worth less, either inflation – less value per dollar, or deflation – money gaining in strength.

When Capitalism took root on this continent, around 1820, the primary problem was deflation – falling prices. Between 1823 and 1848 wholesale prices fell by 25 per cent. With the American Civil War, 1861-65, inflation took over for a while (war always does that) but deflation came back. From 1873 to 1898 the index plunged almost 50 per cent, so that at the end of the nineteenth century basic costs were actually below the level of 1823. The latest deflationary period was during the dirty thirties. But after World War II inflation roared back. War always does that.

However, during the last number of years we have seen unusually stable conditions, as we took advantage of natural freebies in the form of free air, free water and heavily subsidized fuel and food prices. But we can diminish nature's capital only for so long, and then the bills come due with interest, this time in the form of climate change, natural disasters and higher insurance premiums. Add to this more expensive energy, now mostly coming from remote locations and troublesome oil sands, and the result is a higher cost of living.

### False Hopes

A bit of inflation is not bad. We love it when our property values go up and wages keep pace, giving us a semblance of prosperity. However, it is my contrary opinion that house prices will come down. I not only see bubble trouble there: I even see double bubble trouble. Here is why. When the Stock market went down, NASDAQ dropped from 5000 to 1300, puncturing the tech balloon, and the DOW too lost a lot. This monetary disaster should have been followed by an economic recession, but, thanks to interest rates as low as one per cent, this did not happen. Instead a lot of money was pumped into the economy, resulting in cheap mortgages and low down payments, creating so much new cash (even though incomes stayed stagnant and job losses increased) that consumers kept on spending.

Rising house values allowed people to borrow more and get back into the stock market and buy new cars and take vacations simply by saying "Charge it," something also popular with the US administration. All this has created what *The Economist* called 'a phoney recovery.' Wrote this magazine: "Drug addicts get only a temporary high. America's economy, addicted to asset appreciation and debt, is not different."

If my assessment is correct, and inflation returns, then interest rates will go up, pushing down house and stock prices, bringing on that postponed recession. Thus, on the one hand I project inflation, rising costs for gasoline and fuel oil and our daily bread, and on the other hand I expect deflation, decreasing equity in homes and shares: the worst of all possible scenarios and unique in the history of money.

"Oh," you say, "Here comes this fellow again, with his doom and gloom." I agree. I am a doom sayer, but I believe that in money matters it is better to be a pessimist than an optimist: statistics, and my own portfolio, prove that pessimists don't get burned nearly as quickly. The double bubble trouble comes from money owed in the USA. The current growth has been financed by debt which has increased in all categories: credit cards, auto loans, personal loans, mortgages. We've never had so many who owed so much.

Total outstanding consumer credit, (including mortgage and auto loans) reached $9.3 trillion in 2003, representing a $2 trillion increase in less than 36 months. Debt is dangerous. When the value of a home decreases, or when the stock market goes down, the money owed will remain constant. Already there are signs of trouble in America. The percentage of mortgage loans in foreclosure there jumped to 1.15 percent in 2003, compared to 0.87 percent in 2000. Also the American Bankers Association reports that credit card delinquencies reached a new high: 4.09 per cent, in November 2003.

There is probably one last spasm left when consumers receive their 2003 tax refunds. Considering how many families now live paycheck to paycheck, such refunds will almost certainly be spent within days. So, expect to see a short spike in retail sales this spring and early summer, a good time for Martin to call an election.

### Big country big money big problems

There also is another inflation trend. A few weeks ago a newspaper article drew my attention to China with a front page feature on Lester Brown, head of the World Watch Institute. He predicted that within two years the world will experience a grain shortage. Curious about the background of this disturbing news, I went to my library – I have two addictions: reading and running – dug out Lester Brown's earlier China paper and rediscovered some interesting stuff on that big country.

Here is China's dilemma. It is roughly the same size as the United States but has more than four times as many people: 1.2 billion. With 22 percent of the world's population, China has only 7 percent of its fresh water and cropland, 3 percent of its forests and 2 percent of its oil. Because its economy is expanding at more than 9 percent per year, its need for basic resources such as water and oil doubles every 8 years. China, almost overnight, has become the engine of the global economy, importing 35 percent of the world's commodities, resulting in large price hikes for steel, nickel, copper and oil. Soon cereals will follow.

Just as China's cheaper labor and lax environmental laws made it into the assembly centre of the world, so the other Billion Plus nation, India, with millions of well-educated people, working for a fraction of our wages, is taking many of our office jobs. All this will come to haunt us with a vengeance. Who knows, people there may soon replace the Belleville-based telephone information services, because capitalism, like politics, doesn't look beyond tomorrow.

### All tomorrow's commodities

And what will the day after tomorrow bring? With a very limited land base, China's industrial growth has deeply cut into its farming operations. After a tremendous expansion of grain output from 90 million tons in 1950 to 392 million tons in 1998, its grain harvest has fallen in four of the last five years – dropping to 322 million tons in 2003. This drop of 70 million tons is more than we produce in all of Canada. Grain is only one of the three main crops that has suffered. Rice and corn too have been affected.

So China, flush in cash, (it has one of the largest US dollar reserves ) is scouting the world to keep on feeding her many millions. So far her food reserves have covered China's recent shortages, but in another year the storage bins will be empty, and then the world's basic staples will go to the highest bidder.

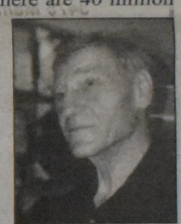
Take rice. Last week Bloomberg, in a special bulletin, warned that China's rice harvest had hit a 12-year low. Trying to cover a rice shortfall of 20 million tons in a world where annual rice exports total only 26 million tons will create chaos in the world's rice economy, to be followed by a corn crisis as China also needs 15 million tons of corn to feed its billions of chickens and millions of pigs. It is the largest pork producer in the world. As China goes, so goes the world.

Several trends are happening at the same time:(1) the loss of irrigation water, with water tables falling and aquifers running on empty, (2) desert expansion due to overuse of fertilizers and mono-cropping, (3) the conversion of cropland to nonfarm uses and the shift to higher-value crops and (4) a decline in double-cropping due to the loss of farm labor in the more prosperous coastal provinces. The result has been that, where in 1998, 90 million hectares were devoted to agriculture, 5 years later this had shrunk by 14 percent to only 78 million.

With water becoming scarce, China's cities and industry get first claim, leaving farmers high and dry, even though irrigation nourishes 50 million hectares in China, a full 20 percent of all irrigated croplands in the world. To produce a ton of wheat or a ton of steel both takes 1000 tons of water, but steel fetches many times the price of wheat, so grain production takes a back seat so that our Dollar stores can supply us with the trinkets we treasure. In a few months watch inflation go up, as China is forced to turn to the world market for massive imports of 30, 40, or 50 million tons per year. This comes at a time when our own grain stocks are at their lowest level in 30 years and when also US farmers are losing irrigation water to aquifer depletion and to cities.

All this means that the cheap food of the last half-century will soon be history. The silver lining is that this may be the answer to obesity: higher food prices may force us to eat wiser and more sparingly, and higher fuel prices may force us to walk and bike more. The United States controls nearly half of world grain exports, which makes for an interesting scenario: the 1.2 billion Chinese consumers have an annual $120-billion trade surplus with the United States, enough to buy the entire US grain harvest twice over, competing with Americans for US food, likely driving up food prices for the entire world.

Perhaps I should mention that China has a shortage of women: there are 40 million more men of marriageable age than there are women. Now there is a business opportunity for some dating service.



*Bert Hielema lives in Tweed, Ontario*

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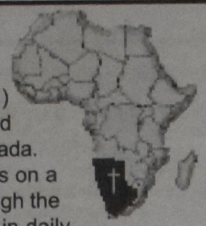

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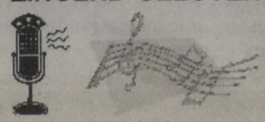

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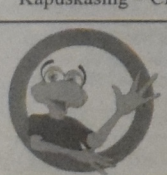

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Rocky Mtn. House AB – CHBW 8:30 am Sun. 94.5 FM
Prince Rupert BC – CJRN 10 am Saturday 100.7 FM


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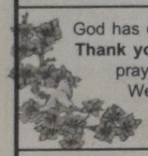
# Classifieds

## Classified Rates

**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION:** *Christian Courier* is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.
**RATES:** (GST added to all rates listed)
All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (P.I.) (2 " wide) **rose@christiancourier.ca**
Display advertising re. businesses & organizations: $18.20 P.I. **ads@christiancourier.ca**
**PHOTOS:** There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.
**PERSONAL ADS:** *Christian Courier* would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is $25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at $16 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.
**NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS**
We offer a $20 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in *Christian Courier* and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.
**SUBMITTING YOUR AD:** fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above Mail: Christian Courier, 1 Hiscott St, St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7
**OTHER INFORMATION:** *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style. *CC* is not responsible for any errors due to hand-written or phoned-in ads.

## Thank You



God has enriched our lives with good family and friends. **Thank you** to everyone for the cards, best wishes and prayers on the occasion of Dirk's 90th Birthday.
We are very thankful to God for His faithfulness, goodness and blessings over the years.
Dirk & Rie Jongkind

## Anniversaries

**SYBREN AND ESTHER DEBOER**

were married April 7th, 1954.
Their wedding text was Psalm 37:5.

Their children and grandchildren:
Orval & Yvonne DeBoer – Jocelyn, Jolene, Chantel
Margaret & Harry Knip
Jilleana & Mark Poortinga, Cherisse, Joshua
Anthony & Marian DeBoer – Nathan, Aaron, Adam
Andrew & Chris DeBoer – Stephanie, Ryan, Danielle

There is an **Open House** April 17th, 2-4 PM at
East Christian Reformed Church
476 Metcalfe Street E, Strathroy Ont.
*Best wishes only.*

## Anniversary

1954 Strathroy, April 15 2004

"We wait in hope for the Lord;
he is our help and shield.
In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.
May your unfailing love
rest upon us, O Lord,
even as we put our hope
in you. Psalm 33:20-22

With thanksgiving to our Lord
for His faithfulness,
we celebrate the
**50th Wedding Anniversary**
of our parents & grandparents

**IPE AND GRACE VANDERDEEN**
**(nee Feddema)**

We pray that the Lord
will continue to bless
and keep you in his care.

**Ipe & Grace VanderDeen**

With love & congratulations from:
Patricia & Rudy Heidelberg, *St.Alberts AB*
Mark, Julianna, Anthony
Ivan & Diana VanderDeen, *Langton ON*
Ivan, Aileen & fiancée Brian, David,
Michelle, Stephanie, Christopher, Amber
Irene & Charlie Dykxhoorn, *Aylmer ON*
Daniel, Sandra, Gregory, Karla
Richard & Barb VanderDeen, *Strathroy ON*
Michael & Rachel (girlfriend),
Karen, Sarah, Andrea, David
Clarence & Irene VanderDeen, *Strathroy ON*
Beth, Jeff, Arlene, Carl, Rachel
Sharon & Steve Talsma, *Harley ON*
Amy, Julie, Karen, Elaine, Mark
John & Teresa VanderDeen, *Aylmer ON*
Emily, Randy, Katie, Ben

**Open House** on
April 17, 2004
from 2:00 - 4:00 at the
Providence United
Reformed Church,
447 Second St.
Strathroy, Ontario.

Home address: 6 Ross Court
Strathroy ON N7G 3W6

**April 4** at 3 pm
A Dutch service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church
Rev. H. DeBolster preaching.

**Dutch Community Easter Song Service** on Easter Sunday, **April 11** at 7:30 p.m. at the Emmanuel Ref. Church, 170 Clarke St. N. **Woodstock**, Ont. Rev. Roeland Hartmans officiating. Babysitting is provided. Refreshments will be served after the service.

Ridderkerk Brighton
1954 March 16 2004

With thankfulness to God
for all his blessings

**ALBERT AND NELL VAN REEWYK**

and their family are happy to announce their **50th Wedding Anniversary.**

JoAnn & John McElheron, *Grand Rapids MI*
Patricia & Barry Van Zoeren, *Brighton ON*
Evita and Erin
Jeffrey & Carla Van Reewyk, *Brighton ON*

Home Address: 1357 DJ Whites Rd
RR 3, Brighton ON K0K 1H0

## Obituary

Groningen, Holland Brampton ON
Sept. 10,1906 March 6, 2004

On March 6, in her 97st year

**TALTJE (Veenstra) STELPSTRA**
**(nee Broersma)**

entered her eternal rest at
Holland Christian Homes in Brampton
Ont. (formerly of Cornwall).
Beloved wife of the late Jan Veenstra
and the late Jacob Stelpstra.

She is sadly missed by her children
Joe & Heilkje Veenstra, *Cornwall*
Riek & Meerten Veldhoen, *Wasaga Beach*
John & Rita Veenstra, *Georgetown*
Ann & Eric Verboon, *Wasaga Beach*
Andrew & Faye Veenstra, *Long Sault*
Diana & Andy Adema, *Cornwall*
Alice & Walter Peacock, *Georgetown*
Melinda & Tim VanderVeer, *Cornwall*
Wendy & Nick Bos, *Georgetown*
She will also be missed by
37 grandchildren & 66 great-grandchildren.
She was predeceased by her
daughter and son-in-law John & Joke
Oosterherd and their grandson Kurt.

The funeral was held on Thurs. March 11, at Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Cornwall Ont. Please send correspondence to Joe Veenstra, 3304 Bruce St, Cornwall ON K6K 1M7

## Obituaries

Epe 1916 Brampton 2004

**JANNA "Jane" BULT**

A Mothers Love
Wherever there's a mother's love,
A mother's tender care,
A mother's understanding heart,
You'll find God dwelling there.

You've been a source of faith and hope
To us all these years through
And we feel blessed and grateful
To have had a mom like you.

Suddenly February 24, 2004
at the age of 87 our mom and grandma
was peacefully taken home
by her Lord and Savior.

She was greatly loved and will be
missed by her children & grandchildren.
Predeceased by her husband
John Bult (1984)

Henry & Grace Bult, *Waterloo*
Vanessa & Doug
Adrian & Denise
Arjan & Linda Bult, *Peterborough*
Ian & Amanda
Robert & Lina
Dennise & Nikki
Mike & Elizabeth
Wes & Shelley Bult, *Brampton*
Brittney
Brayden (born February 25,2004)

Psalm 25:1-2a
"To you O Lord I lift up my soul;
In you I trust, O my God."

Correspondence: 608 Royal Fern St
Waterloo ON N2V 2P5

Andijk, N. Holland Edmonton, AB
November 19, 1918 March 9, 2004

**GERRIT (George) ZEE**

In his own time, God took home our beloved husband, father, grandfather & great-grandfather Gerrit (George) Zee.

He is survived by his loving wife
Grietje (Grace) nee Gorter.

Children:
Ebeline & John Hawtin, *Edmonton*
Cor & Doreen Zee, *Edmonton*
Frank & Marlys Zee, *St Albert*
Alfred & Rhonda Zee, *Banff*
Tena & Abel Horneman, *Rollyview*
Rosa Zee, *Edmonton*
Annette & Will Greenwood, *Medicine Hat*
John & Cheryl Zee, *St Albert*
Numerous grandchildren &
great-grandchildren
Daughter-in-law Joan Zee, *Edmonton*

Sisters and brothers-in-law:
Winnie & Ralph Prins, *Lacombe*
Aaf & John Kooiman, *Red Deer*
Anje & Simon Swier, *Lacombe*
Tiny & Adolf OpdenDries, *Red Deer*
Janny & Klaas Brink, *Bentley*
Dorothy (Ben de Boon † 2000) &
Gerrit Meindersma, *Lacombe*
Helen (John † 1997) Kits, *Lacombe*

Sisters-in-law in Holland:
Annie Gorter
Ali Gorter - de Boer
Aaf Gorter - Groot
Annie Gorter - Groot

Correspondence: Mrs. Grace Zee
Suite 138 - 13425-57 St
Edmonton AB T5A 2G1

January 7, 1915 Garyp, Friesland February 19, 2004 Brampton, Ontario

"That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Ephesians 3:16

**MARIA "Beppe" DEBOER**

On Thursday morning, February 19, she quietly passed on to her dear Lord with a smile marking her last breath, as she was surrounded by her loved ones. She will be truly missed but never forgotten by her family and dear friends.

She is survived by her three loving daughters:
Renee & George St. Cyr, *Milton, Ontario*
Maryke & Joe Mast, *Neerlandia, Alberta*
Betty DeBoer, *Milton, Ontario*
10 grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren.

A Memorial Service was held at Holland Christian Homes, February 21, 2004.
Pastor Herman Praamsma officiated.

Correspondence: Betty DeBoer, 342 Martin Street, Milton ON L9T 2R6.

**WILLEM RIENK RANG**

Born March 6, 1926 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.
Graduated into Glory March 4, 2004 in Oshawa, Ontario.

For 36 years, he served as a teacher in Ontario Christian Schools, turning young hearts towards God. He was a marine, artist, author, musician, athlete, preacher, linguist and wit. He also was the faithful husband of Audrey, his sweetheart, friend and partner since that first day on the beach, during war, across an ocean and through 52 years of an extraordinary, loving marriage. He was, above all, a child of God.

William was adored, respected and fiercely loved by his family:
Marten & Rita Demmer and Mark, Daniel and Matthew
Debbie & Hans Bulk and Nicole and Ryan Worsfold, Kristen, Paul and Danielle
Wendy & John Bakker and Rachel, Alicia and Derek
Elly & Doug Adams and Andrew, Kevin and Timothy
Lloyd & Sandra Rang and William Cameron, born on March 3, 2004 - who met his Opa through a miracle of the Grace of God.

Survived by brothers Dick, Hiddo, Jaap and Gerrit in The Netherlands. Predeceased by his brother, Lokko. Dear brother-in-law to Joop DeVoest, Henk Bruinink (deceased), Tony Bruinink and Bill Bruinink.

The funeral service was held on Monday, March 8 at Hebron Christian Reformed Church in Whitby. Donations in lieu of flowers can be sent to Dunnville Christian School RR #1, 37 Robinson Rd, Dunnville ON N1A 2W1 or the Alzheimer's Society of Canada.

"Before God in Zion."

Address: Lloyd Rang, 33 Roser CR, Bowmanville ON L1C 3N7 Ph.905-623-1310

# Job Opportunities / Classifieds

## Church News

Classis Eastern Canada, in its meeting of Feb. 27, 2004, admitted

**Cand. Jacob Boer**

to the ministry of the Word in the CRCNA, with the concurrence of Synodical Deputies J. Kerssies (Huron), H. Praamsma (Toronto) and E. Visser (Quinte). Cand. Boer is the pastor-elect of First CRC of Montreal.

We pray God's blessing on Cand. Boer and that congregation.

*James Kooistra S.C.*

Classis Eastern Canada, in its meeting of Feb.27, 2004 admitted

**Michelle DePooter**

to the office of Ministry Associate. Michelle will serve as Interim Chaplain at the Seafarers Centre in Montreal.

May the Lord bless her in her work and witness.

*James Kooistra S.C.*

**WANTED:**
**Dutch Theological Books**

Several Reformed seminarians seeking Dutch-language theology and commentary books. We would love to contact any who desire to sell or donate such books!

Please contact

James Sinke at
**219-322-9064 /**
jasinke@hotmail.com or
Doug Barnes
**219-933-6603 /**
dngbarnes@juno.com

**FIRST CRC of ORILLIA**

in Ontario's beautiful Lake Country, seeks a **pastor** who shares our vision to reach beyond our walls. The pastor will have a passion for the unchurched, personal experience in community outreach, and also an understanding of discipleship, mentoring, and Stephen Ministry.

Our congregation of 250 members is involved in a visioning process. Over the last five years we have developed strong pastoral care lay ministries and more active children's and youth ministries. We desire our worship to be authentic and wish to better enfold all of God's people. We now feel called to a greater sense of community and to become an outreach-motivated church.

For more information, please contact
**Maarthen Reinders** at **705-329-4609** or
mmjb@rogers.com

**ALLISTON CRC OF ALLISTON ONTARIO**

in the heart of potato country is looking for a **pastor** ready to take on the challenge of pasturing our congregation in a fast-growing community. We are a congregation of 83 families, close to Toronto but far enough away to still maintain our small town flavour. We have several thriving ministries and are involved in our community.

Inquiries can be made to:
**John Van Loenen 905-936-2550 chair of council,** or
**Aris DeBruin 705-435-5317 Chair of the Calling Committee**

**COLLINGWOOD C.R.C.**

IS SEEKING A NEW PASTOR

We will become vacant in June due to the retirement of our current pastor. We are a congregation of 45 families, situated in the renown recreation area of the beautiful Georgian triangle near Georgian Bay. For more information, contact
**Louise Noordegraaf at 1-705-428-6705**
**or email collingwoodcrc@canada.com**
Visit our website at collingwoodcrc.org

Position available:
**CAMPUS MINISTER FOR BROCK UNIVERSITY**
St. Catharines ON

This is a Classis Niagara, Christian Reformed Ecumenical Chaplaincy, ministering to students, staff, and faculty in a mid-sized, multi-faith educational institution. Qualifications include: a graduate degree or equivalent experience and an understanding of engaging contemporary culture from a Reformed theological perspective.

For more information, job description and profile please contact
**Classis Niagara Chaplain Search Committee**
**c/o Alan Bennink**
**23 Clarendon Avenue**
**St. Catharines, ON, L2P 1G1**

**BIKE TOUR MANAGER**

**THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH (CRC) IN NORTH AMERICA**

is seeking to fill a contract position to direct and coordinate the Bike Tour initiative to be held to celebrate the **100th Anniversary** of the CRC in Canada. Responsibilities include coordinating logistics for the bike tour and eleven celebration events, develop detailed timelines, and provide support to the Bike Tour Task Force.

A working knowledge of the CRC in Canada and a passion for the bike tour is required. The qualified applicant will be able to coordinate multitasks and possess good public relations and administrative skills. A flexible work schedule and the ability to travel extensively are also required.

In keeping with our Equal Opportunity policy, we encourage applicants from ethnic (racial) and First nations communities.

A detailed position description is available upon request. For consideration, please submit your resume and letter of interest by **April 2, 2004.**

**Director of Personnel**
**Christian Reformed Church in North America**
**3475 Mainway, PO Box 5070 STN LCD 1, Burlington ON L7R 3Y8 Canada**
**Ph: 905.330.2920 Fax: 905.336.8344**
**Email: coleman@crcna.org**

## Teachers

SEVERAL TEACHING POSITIONS AVAILABLE
**TRENTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**

invites applications from qualified teachers in our Junior and Intermediate grades, effective September 2004. Strength in Music or Phys. Ed., or French will be an asset. Applicants must be in full agreement with the TCS Constitution and commit to uphold and promote the same. Please send letter of application, resumes, etc. to:

**340 Second Dug Hill Rd., RR #4, Trenton, K8V 5P7**

Before April 8, 2004

**MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY**

Is an interdenominational K-12 school in Windsor, Ontario with a diverse church base. We are inviting applications from computer literate teachers with a vibrant Christian walk who wish to honour the Lord in the classroom.

**SECONDARY TEACHER**

This position will be of interest to an individual looking for full-time or part-time in Mathematics, Technology, Social Science, Canadian World Studies. Suitably qualified teachers should send resume and appropriate documentation supporting your interest to:

**William Van Dyke, Principal**
**Maranatha Christian Academy**
**939 Northwood St., Windsor, ON N9E 2B4**
**Ph: 519-966-7424 Fax: 519-966-9519**
**Email: principal@maranathachristian.ca**
**Website: www.maranathachristian.ca**

**SMITHVILLE DISTRICT CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL**

is an exciting Christian learning community led by an excellent teaching staff, located in the heart of the Niagara Peninsula.

We are accepting applications for full and part time positions in the following subject areas:

Mathematics, History, English, French, Accounting, Family Studies & Nutrition

If you are a qualified Christian high school teacher, please send application, references, statement of faith etc to:

**Mr. Ted Harris, Administrator**
**Smithville District Christian High School**
**6488 Smithville Road, PO Box 40**
**Smithville ON LOR 2A0**
**905-957-3255**
**sdoffice@sdch.on.ca** or **tharris@sdch.on.ca**

**CALVIN CHRISTIAN COLLEGIATE**

is seeking applicants for **middle school** and **high school** teaching positions for the 2004-2005 school year. We require teachers for full time Math/Science, full time Bible/ELA and full time ELA/Phys. Ed. Applicants should be able to articulate a personal statement of Christian belief.

Please send a resume and cover letter to:

**D. Taylor, Principal**
**Calvin Christian Collegiate**
**706 Day St, Winnipeg MB R2C 1B6**
**Ph. (204) 222-7910 Fax: 222-8511**

The closing date for these positions is April 8, 2004.

We appreciate all applications, however, only those shortlisted will be contacted.

*See page 22 for more job opportunities*

Check out our website:
**www.christiancourier.ca**
for issue dates, deadlines and job opportunity ads recently placed in the Christian Courier.

## Job Opportunities / Advertising

Due to rapid growth, the **Christian Labour Association of Canada** has both immediate and potential openings (in Grimsby and Ottawa, ON and Surrey and Kelowna, B.C.), for

### Reprsentative Trainees

We invite applicants to consider a challenging career opportunity with a growing Christian trade union. CLAC undertakes to train successful applicants in labour relations and workplace representation functions.

Applicants will be assessed on their confidence in dealing with people, oral and written communication skills, Christian perspective, and ability to deal effectively with conflict situations. Applicants are asked to indicate their geographic preference or limitations, if any.

Please address a letter of application, together with a resume and references to:

Neil Roos, Executive Director
5920 Atlantic Drive
Mississauga, ON L4W 1N6
Tel: (905) 670-7383
Fax: (905) 670-8416
ssalvati@clac.ca

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Due to the continued growth of its health insurance and pension plans, CLAC also has an opening for a

### Benefit Plan Administrator

The successful candidate will be a highly motivated self-starter and possess a degree in business administration or the equivalent. In addition, this individual should have excellent communication skills, oral and written, as well as strong interpersonal skills. Preference will be given to those knowledgeable in the areas of finances, insurance and pension benefits. Knowledge of Microsoft Office (especially Word and Excel) and DataEase computer programs would be a definite asset. We offer a competitive salary and benefit package.

Applications should be addressed to:

Peter Van Duyvenvoorde, General Manager
CLAC Benefit Administration Office
89 South Service Rd, PO Box 219
Grimsby, ON L3M 4G3
Tel: (905) 945-1500
Fax: (905) 945-7200
pvanduyvenvoorde@clac.ca

clac

All applications will be held in confidence.

---

## Teachers

Do you want to teach in a Christian school in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick or PEI?

Check out positions with the ***Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools*** at www.oacs.org. Updated daily

OACS

www.oacs.org

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-Bruce Clemenger (ICS Ph.D. Candidate), President
Evangelical Fellowship of Canada

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Upcoming Concert

**Pro Musica Choir - May 1** Saturday at 8:00 pm
Conductor: Brent Fifield
Presents: ***O Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem***
Port Nelson United Church
3132 South Drive, **Burlington** Ontario
For tickets: Adults $12.00 Senior/Student $8.00
Family (16 and under) $30.00
*Add $2.00 if purchasing at the door.*
Call: 905 632 1347 or visit www.promusicachoir.org

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dutch treat

## ROYAL DUTCH TREAT

**When:** APRIL 30TH 2004 6PM - 2AM
**Where:** The Liberty Grand ~ Exhibition Place Toronto
**Cost:** $35/pp ~ includes all food & entertainment
Cash bar (after all, it is a "Dutch Treat")

The Royal Dutch Treat with Consul General, Mr. Jan Hesseling as Patron, coincides with the traditional celebrations in Holland in honor of the Dutch Queen's birthday. The event will showcase "what it means to be Dutch." The activities include

•a Dutch Flee market • traditional foods such as herring and bitterballen
•live cabaret •a jazz club •a Dutch DJ •face painting •KLM Art Contest

**and** attendees can **visit**

• a "Lights on Holland" pavilion which showcases Holland in all its famous aspects such as Madurodam maquettes and a mini Keukenhof (flower display).

Tickets are on sale through the website **www.royaldutchtreat.ca** See the "let's go register" section for details. Or send a cheque payable to Dutch Treat Organization Inc. for $35 per ticket with possible added amount for charity before April 15th to:

**Dutch Treat Organization Inc.**
**c/o 493 Ridge Road East Beamsville, Ontario L0R 1B2**

Please indicate your home address, phone number, contact person and e-mail address if applicable as well. If you like to become a volunteer during the event please let us know in the same letter.

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## Events/Advertising

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.**

**Mar 26,27** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevende Juli" at 2 pm & 8 pm at **Woodstock** Market Centre Theatre. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.

**Apr 3** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevende Juli" at 2 pm at Evergreen Senior Centre, **Guelph**. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.

**Apr 4** A Dutch service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3 pm. Rev. H. DeBolster preaching.

**Apr 10** **Annual Festival of Praise** by the **Christian Male Chorus** Association of Southwestern Ontario. 7:30 p.m. Centennial Hall, 550 Wellington St. **London**. Five choirs with over 200 men participating. Tickets: $13 (519)451-5484 or email: jettrick@sympatico.ca For information: (519)637-4357.

**Apr 11** **Dutch** Community Easter Song **Service** on Easter Sunday, at 7:30 p.m. At the Emmanuel Reformed Church 170 Clarke St. N. **Woodstock** ON, Rev. Roeland Hartmans officiating

**Apr 18, 24, 25** **Hebron CRC**, **Whitby,** Ontario, 50th anniversary celebrations. See ad next issue or phone 1-905-655-5020 or website www.hebroncrc.ca for more info

**Apr 24** The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevende Juli" 8 pm at the **Jordan** Christian Heritage School. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.

**Apr 24** The MEN OF PRAISE (from Woodstock) in concert, at the Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis** Ont., at 7:30 pm. Freewill offering.

**Apr 24** **Festival of Praise** Male Choirs from Brampton, Hamilton, York, Simcoe & St. Catharines. 7:30 pm. at Covenant CRC, 278 Parnell St. **St. Catharines**. For tickets ($10) and info, call 905-934-1348. See ad this issue for more information.

**Apr 30** The **First Royal Dutch Treat** will take place at the Liberty Grand, Exhibition Place in **Toronto**, Ontario. See this issue for more information or see www.royaldutchtreat.ca

**Apr 30, May 2** John Calvin CRC, **Truro**, Nova Scotia 50th anniversary. Former ministers, members and friends are invited to a celebration potluck dinner & program Friday, and Sunday service. For more information call (902) 897-2083 or aalkema@ns.sympatico.ca

**May 1** **Pro Musica Choir** Conductor: Brent Fifield, presents *O Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem,* Darke: *Mass in E*, *Psalm 43* by Mendelssohn, *Psalm 104* by Glick. Also selctions by Ramisch, Purcell and Howells. Organist: Bruce Kirkpatrick Hill. 8:00 pm at Port Nelson United Church, 3132 South Drive, **Burlington** ON Adults $12.00 Senior/Student $8.00 Family (16 and under) $30.00 Add $2.00 at the door. For info call:905 632 1347 or visit www.promusicachoir.org

**May 2** **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 pm Knox Presbyterian Church 55 Hincks St, **St. Thomas.** Freewill offering for Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357

**May 2** Guelph Spring Festival presents duo organists **Jan Overduin & Jonathan Oldengarm** in concert at 3:00 pm. A pre-concert chat will be held at 2:30 pm. Both events at St. George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich Street, **Guelph, ON**. For tickets and information, call the River Run Centre Box Office at 519-763-3000 or 1-877-520-2408, or visit www.guelphspringfestival.org

**May 7** Calgary Society of Organists presents **Jonathan Oldengarm** in concert, 8:00 pm., at Grace Presbyterian Church, **Calgary, AB**. For information call 403-249-0764. Single tickets are $15 and single student/senior tickets are $10.

**May 12** 50th anniversary of the Bowmanville, Ottawa, & Quinte Region Lady's Society. Convention at Day's Inn, 33 Benson St, **Kingston,** ON. See ad this page for details.

**May 15,16** **Sarnia** First Christian Reformed Church, 70th Anniversary. Contact firstcrc@xcelco.on.ca for more information, or call 519-336-8808.

**May 18** National organ competition winner **Jonathan Oldengarm** plays monumental works of the French romantics on the great Casavant organ at St. Mary's Basilica, Spring Garden Road at Barrington Street, **Halifax, NS**. **8:00 pm.** For tickets and information, call the St. Cecilia Concert Series Box Office at 902-420-4085, or visit www.stcecilia.ca.

**May 29** First Christian Reformed Church of **Montreal** will celebrate its **50th anniversary**. Ph: 1-514-684-4430 or E-mail: georgelucy@aei.ca

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*—Psalm 90:1*


**50th ANNIVERSARY of the Bowmanville, Ottawa, & Quinte Region Lady's Society**

On **May 12**, we hope to celebrate with a mini convention at Day's Inn, 33 Benson St., **Kingston**, Ontario, located off the 401, exit 617 South.

The theme will be *'Faithful Lives, Fruitful Living'*. Our morning speaker will be Rev. A.W. Koppendrayer. The topic will be *'Declaring God's faithfulness to the next generation'*.

The coffee will be on at 9:30 am and lunch is included in the fee. During the afternoon we will have the pleasure of listening to Eduard Klassen on the Paraguayan harp as well as performances by some of the local talent.

It promises to be a great day of celebration and fellowship.

Bring your friends. **Tickets** are $30.00 if ordered before April 30, $35.00 after this date. For tickets, send a S.A.S.E. to:

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News

# Should Lenin get a Christian burial? Debate rages

**Jonathan Luxmoore**

Warsaw, 16 March (ENI)—A Russian Orthodox spokesman has called for Lenin's body to be removed from its mausoleum in Moscow's Red Square and reburied according to Christian rites, as debates rage on about how holy the site is where the atheist revolutionary is buried.

Russian Orthodox Church observers have noted that opinions remained divided over the famous landmark, whose future has been debated since the Soviet Union's 1990-1 break-up.

"It isn't normal for a person's body to be placed on public display and used as an exhibit," said Vsevolod Chaplin, deputy director of the Moscow Patriarchate's External Affairs Department, in remarks reported on March 8 by Poland's Kosciol.pl ecumenical news agency. "Decisions about the future of Lenin's body should be taken by the state authorities, but in a way which won't divide Russian society."

The statement follows similar calls by other Orthodox bodies, including Russia's Union of Orthodox Citizens, which warned in December 2002 that the exhibit's "unnatural presence" shocked "the conscience of believers."

Government officials are, however, reluctant to agree to dismantle the mausoleum, which has been vigorously defended by supporters of Russia's Communist Party.

Vladimir Ilich Lenin (1870-1924) was embalmed two months after his death and placed in Red Square in August 1924 by a commission that sought to immortalise the man seen as the father of the Russian Revolution.

The mausoleum was replaced in 1930 by the present grey-and-black building, from which Soviet leaders traditionally reviewed military parades, while the city of Petrograd was renamed Leningrad, although it has now reverted to its original name St Petersburg. Consideration was also given to renaming the Christian Sabbath, Sunday, as "Lenin-day".

Communist legislators from Russia's Duma in 1997 forced through a vote forbidding Red Square's "architectural reconstruction," after Russian newspapers reported plans to have both Lenin and the murdered Tsar Nicholas II re-interred.

However, other politicians, including former President Boris Yeltsin, have proposed burying Lenin alongside his mother, Maria Alexandrovna, in St Petersburg's Volvovsky cemetery. They have also urged the removal of other communist figureheads buried in the nearby Kremlin Wall, including Soviet leaders Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, as well as US journalist John Reed and Lenin's lover, Inessa Armand.

In Spring 2003, 161 Duma members petitioned Moscow's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, against a planned Red Square concert by British singer Paul McCartney, warning it would be "senseless and blasphemous to hold the event so close to the burial sites of Soviet luminaries".

In May 1999, Orthodox Patriarch Alexei II also recommended Lenin's reburial. "Red Square is a beautiful place which was turned into a cemetery for revolutionary activists," the patriarch said. "I hope a pantheon can be set up instead, or some other burial place for their remains."

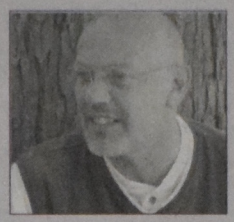
Vsevolod Chaplin said the Orthodox church had long regarded the placing of Lenin's remains in a mausoleum as "contrary to Russian tradition and culture," and would be ready to participate in a reburial ceremony "if the nation wished it." "Lenin's role in history was truly tragic," the Moscow Patriarchate official added.

Russian officials agreed a year ago to return an Orthodox cathedral at Ulyanovsk in the southern Volga region, where Lenin, born Vladimir Ilich Ulyanov, was baptised in 1870 and married in a church wedding in 1898, 19 years before leading the October Revolution.

Up to 200,000 Russian Orthodox priests, monks and nuns are believed to have been killed in communist purges under the rule of Lenin and his successor, Josef Stalin, which left at least 33,000 Orthodox churches and 500 monasteries destroyed.

The Roman Catholic vicar-general in Russia, Antoni Hej, told ENI he believed minority churches had "no official position" on Lenin's burial place. "For communists, Lenin is still the leader – since his mausoleum is their temple, it's obvious they'll keep on defending it," the priest added. "Yet there are plenty of other Russians who believe today's problems all rise from the fact that he still isn't buried."

# James Schaap's latest novel nominated for award



SIOUX CENTER, IA - James Calvin Schaap's novel, "Touches the Sky" has been nominated by *Christianity Today* editors for a book award. It is one of only five under consideration in the fiction category. Schaap, an English professor at Dordt College, recently released the book that was first serialized in The Banner. The annual award program is published in *Christianity Today's* June issue.

A work of fiction based on historical fact, the story takes place in the Dakota Territory as Dutch immigrants move into Indian Territory. Readers are drawn into the lives of both cultures as their pathways intersect and clashes boil over into the violence of the historic massacre at Wounded Knee.

A panel of judges will rank all entries in 10 categories over the next few months, selecting the top books in categories including apologetics/evangelism, Biblical studies, Christianity and culture, Christian living, the church/pastoral leadership, fiction, history/biography, missions/global affairs, spirituality and theology/ethics.

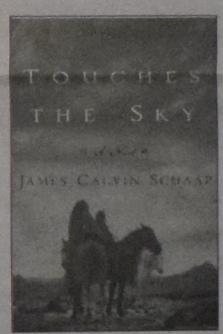
Last year *Christianity Today* received 300 nominated titles from 46 well-known evangelical publishers, academic presses, and mainstream houses. The award criteria include helping readers understand the people, events, and ideas that shape evangelical life, thought, and mission.

James Schaap was drawn to the topic of this book by ancestors who were settlers in South Dakota at the turn of the century. He is a professor of English at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, and is the author of more than 20 books, including *Romey's Place, The Secrets of Barneveld Calvary, Home Free* and *In the Silence There Are Ghosts.*

Schaap's work has been awarded five top Evangelical Press Association fiction awards and four Associated Church Press Awards. His novel, *Romey's Place*, was runner-up to Jan Karon for the Christy Award best contemporary Christian novel of 2000.

"James Schaap captures that frightened and doubtful little child inside each of us and clothes him in buckskins," says Pine Ridge Indian Reservation physician, Dr. David Mulder, in reviewing the novel. "It is not enough that the main character, Jan Ellerbroek, must deal with the death of his wife and children, and the demands of Dutch immigrant society. Also throw in racial prejudice, Old West reservation politics, predestination, starvation, cracked melting pots, murder on the prairie, interracial love affairs, the Seventh Cavalry, the Ghost Dance cult and the mystery of faith. And that's just the start of this Great Plains cyclone of a story. Good luck putting this one down."

The author of more than 20 books, James Schaap's latest effort has a crossover appeal that speaks to a broad audience. Native American playwright and author, Diane Glancy says, "This book faces issues that don't have easy answers: Who has a hold on the truth of a nation's history, and how truth can take different forms."




*Copies of "Touches the Sky" are available at the Dordt College Bookstore 712-722-6420 or at www.Amazon.com and other web retailers.*

# *Passion* film lessens hostility towards Jews, poll shows

(CNSNews.com) – Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* is lessening hostility towards Jews contrary to what the film's Jewish critics predicted, a new poll shows.

The survey, conducted by the Institute for Jewish and Community Research, shows 24 percent of Americans familiar with the film say that Jews alive at the time of Christ's crucifixion were not responsible for it. Less than two percent of Americans surveyed blame Jews for the crucifixion today.

"While the film may have a different impact elsewhere in the world, so far *The Passion of the Christ* is not producing any significant anti-Jewish backlash," said Dr. Gary Tobin, president of ICJR.

"The film and perhaps even more, the discussions about the film, are having something of a positive effect, which is good news. Some Jewish and Christian leaders have been understandably worried that the film might unleash a wave of hostility toward Jews and even erode the constructive effects of Vatican II," he said.

"But this does no appear to be happening. Their concern, however, was not unfounded given the rise of anti-Semitism around the world, and the central theme of Christ killing in anti-Jewish prejudice," said Tobin.

Sixty-four percent of respondents said the film provides an accurate and thorough portrayal of the meaning of the life of Jesus, compared to 13 percent who disagreed.

Among those who saw the film or are familiar with it, most (83 percent) said the film had no impact on the extent to which they feel contemporary Jews are to blame, compared to two percent who said the film made them more likely to hold Jews responsible, and nine percent who said it made them less likely to hold today's Jews responsible.

Of the 146 respondents who saw the film, 80 percent said the film had no impact, five percent said it made them more likely to hold Jews responsible, and 12 percent said the film made them less likely to hold today's Jews responsible.

"The questions raised about the anti-Jewish images in the movie helped bring the question of the role of Jews in the death of Christ out in the open. It is better to have dialogue and honest discussion and trust that the bond between Christians and Jews in America is strong," said Tobin.